DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 192 JC 030 631

AUTHOR	Flaga, Catherine Therese
TITLE	The Process of Transition for Community College Transfer Students.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	173p.; Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Doctoral Dissertations (041) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Articulation (Education); College Outcomes Assessment; Community Colleges; Institutional Cooperation; Outcomes of Education; Program Evaluation; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; Transfer Policy; *Transfer Programs; *Transitional Programs; *Two Year College Students; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Michigan State University

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines transfer shock and its impact on community college students after transfer to four-year institutions. The author utilized the concept of consequential transition as developed by King Beach as a lens for examining progress over time in the relationship of the transfer student to the new four-year university. Thirty-five transfer students were interviewed in January of their second semester at Michigan State University (MSU) regarding their community college experiences and their first semester at MSU. Thirty students returned to recount their second semester experiences and to compare them with their first semester and their community college experiences. The author developed five themes: (1) Learning Resources; (2) Connecting; (3) Familiarity; (4) Negotiating; and (5) Integrating. The themes played out in three environments: (1) Academic; (2) Social; and (3) Physical. The 35 students were lived both on- and off-campus. They had attended only one community college, transferred in with 45 credits or more, were ages 18-24, and were full-time students with various majors. The author found that a transfer orientation course can be valuable, and that informal sources, such as friends who were MSU natives, were the most highly utilized resource. Campus activities and formal peer mentor programs, as well as living on campus, assisted in the peer connection process. (Contains 83 references.) (NB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 482 192

THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

By

Catherine Therese Flaga

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education
Department of Educational Administration

2002

JC030631

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

C. Flaga

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS

By

Catherine Therese Flaga

Little existing literature addresses the full picture of the process of transition for community college transfer students over time at their new four-year institution. Many students experience "transfer shock" (Hills 1965), which is defined by a drop in grade point average at the new four-year institution. However, the transfer shock literature does not even begin to tell the full story of transfer student transition. In addition, the literature is relatively void of research on the transition that transfer students undergo within the social culture and physical structures of the four-year university. A great deal of research has been conducted on freshman transition and success issues, as well as transition issues for K-12 students. However, a much more limited body of research is available about transfer student success. There is a need to have a clearer understanding of the process of community college transfer student transition over time, and the ways in which they learn about and adapt to their new environment. Therefore, this research project was conducted to address the question: What is the nature of transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university?

I utilized the concept of consequential transition, as developed by King Beach (1999) as a lens for examining progress over time in the relationship of the transfer student to their new four-year university. Taking a process approach helped to enhance the existing literature, since very little longitudinal research or research with more than one data collection point has been done on transfer students. Using a qualitative, design with two data collection points, I studied how a group of community college transfer students proceeded through their first year at a four-year university. Thirty-five community college transfer students were interviewed in January of their second semester at Michigan State University about their community college experiences and their first semester at MSU. Thirty students returned in late March or early April of this same term to recount their second semester's experiences and to reflectively compare their time at the community college to their time at MSU, as well as to compare their first semester at MSU to their second semester. Their stories led to the development of five main themes: Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating. The themes played out in three different environments within the university: academic, social, and physical. Differences were also noted in terms of living arrangements. In addition, students in the study offered advice to future transfer students. Using this knowledge as a basis, many implications are discussed as well as potential interventions by community colleges, four-year universities as well as the students themselves to assist with successful transition. Interventions include improvements on and additions to traditional institutionally-based transition programming, student affairs programming, and academic advising.

©Copyright by

CATHERINE THERESE FLAGA

2002

This dissertation is dedicated to

my husband

Michael P. Flaga

with all my love and gratitude,

to all the community college transfer students

I have had the pleasure to work with

who inspired this project,

and

to future transfer students

who I hope will benefit from this research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After working closely with transfer students for over seven years, it is an honor to put their stories to paper and bring them to life for a broader audience. It is quite clear that there are many similarities among transfer students, but a great deal of uniqueness with each story as well. I have strived to portray their experiences in an accurate light and to illuminate their journey through MSU.

Dissertating requires a great deal of patience, endurance, perseverance, and adjustment. Fortunately, by working very closely with my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Marilyn Amey, every problem was met with a creative and workable solution. Having a competent and caring advisor has been over half the battle for me. I have needed and gratefully received the proper balance of challenge and support: just enough encouragement accompanied by push to get the job done. Thank you Marilyn for your time and caring attention to this project, especially your thorough feedback on my writing. I honestly do not know how I could have done it otherwise. I am also very grateful to my committee members, Drs. King Beach, John Dirkx, and Anna Ortiz for committing time, expertise, and encouragement to my dissertation. I am especially grateful to King for his work on and development of Consequential Transitions, which inspired the shape of this study.

I have received a great deal of professional support for this project. I am indebted to the College of Natural Science and the Department of Zoology for their ongoing support, tuition reimbursement and flexibility with my work schedule. Many thanks to Deb Dotterer, who has been an incredibly supportive supervisor and provided me with encouragement for the final push.

I would especially like to thank my mentor, Dr. Eileen Wilson, for inspiring me to pursue my doctorate, for providing challenge and support throughout the years, and for being my advocate within her former role as my supervisor. Eileen's commitment to excellence and professional development as well as her human touch are evident to all she encounters. I feel blessed to engage in a rich mentoring relationship with her.

I am very grateful to have found my "created cohort", JoLee Black Bear, Sonia Garcia-Lombardini, and Arend Vander Pols. We endured many a class together, and when any of us was having a rough day, the others would chime in and keep us going. Thank you for empathizing, analyzing writing, and for your friendship. Special thanks to Arend for spending the summer of '99 grappling with the literature and keeping me on target with our study group for comps on 9/9/99. Thanks for making such a grueling process more comforting! Also thanks to fellow students Pam Eddy and Anne Hornak, who have been very insightful and uplifted my spirit on many occasions. A wonderful side effect of the program has been finding such great friends.

Personally, my husband Mike has been a saint throughout this process. Whatever I needed, he provided, be it technical support, a kind word, a back rub, or a clean house. His stability and love have kept me going all these years. Thanks for taking such good care of me! Many, many thanks go out to my dear friend Cristina Kapustij, lovingly known as Gidget, whose faith in me gave me the courage to continue in the rough spots, take some needed breaks in the middle to play hot tub scrabble, and someone to celebrate the triumphs with. Thanks for understanding! I would also like to thank my parents and ten siblings who highly value education and provided a loving, solid foundation on which I have been able to reach my goals.

Most of all, I would like to thank the transfer students I have had the honor to work with who inspired this project, especially the student participants of this study who let me into their lives for a while. I hope their stories will help their fellow students in the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES xiiii

CHAPTER ONE: PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 1

CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 5
  Introduction 5
  The Students and their Environments 5
    Community College Students 5
    Community College Missions & Culture 6
    Four-Year University Mission & Culture 7
  Adjustment Research 10
    Coping Mechanisms 10
    Coping And College Adjustment 14
    K-12 Adjustment Studies 16
    Freshmen Adjustment and Development 18
    Transfer Shock 21
    Other Community College Adjustment Studies 25
  Theoretical Frames 27
    Person-Environment Fit 28
    Consequential Transition 29

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 31
  Research Question 31
  Participants and Site for the Study 31
  Data Collection 36
    Interviews 36
  Procedures 38
    Pilot Study 38
    Main Study 38
  Analysis of Data 39
    Coding of the Data 40
  Study Location and Recruitment 41
  Limitations 42

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA 45
  Research Questions 45
  Introduction to Themes & Additional Findings 46
  Community College Experiences 49
    Academic Environment at the Community College 49
    Social Environment at the Community College 51
    Physical Environment at the Community College 53
  Learning Resources 54
    Formal Learning Resources 55
    Informal Learning Resources 61
    Initiative 63

Connecting....65
Connecting-Academic Environment....66
Connecting-Social Environment....69
Connecting-Physical Environment....73
Familiarity....77
Familiarity-Academic Environment....80
Familiarity-Social Environment....86
Familiarity-Physical Environment....87
Negotiating....90
Negotiating-Academic Environment....90
Negotiating-Social Environment....96
Negotiating-Physical Environment....99
Integrating....102
Advice For Future Transfers....108
Have Prior Contact With MSU & Visit Campus....108
Connect With an Advisor & Gain Transfer Course Equivalency Information....109
Live On-Campus....110
Understand the Parking System....111
Get Involved On-Campus....112
Things MSU Can Do To Help....112
Summary....113

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS....114
Overview of the Study....114
Review of the Themes and Additional Findings....117
Implications....120
Overlying Structural Considerations....121
Negotiating....121
"Becoming a Spartan"....123
Four-Year University Academic Environment....124
Campus Structure....125
Traditional Institutionally-based Transition Programming....126
Transfer Admissions and Campus Visits....126
Orientation....127
Transfer Orientation Seminar Courses....128
Increased Learning Connections....131
Campus Involvement....132
Mentor programs....132
On-campus living....133
Community College and Four-Year University Advising Implications....135
Collaboration between Community College and Four-Year University Academic Advisors....136
Application of the Themes to Advising Practice....137
Benefits of Academic Advising for Students....138
Ideas For Future Research....139
Conclusion....141

APPENDICES....143

APPENDIX I..144
  QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEW ONE..145
  QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEW TWO...147

APPENDIX II...148
  RECRUITMENT E- MAIL...149
  PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM..151

REFERENCES...154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant characteristics 35

Table 2. Learning resources students utilized to learn about MSU 65

Table 3. Means of connecting 77

CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Most community college transfer students expect to succeed academically at their new four-year institutions due to their previous college experience. Similarly, the university structure assumes that students do not need as much assistance with transition as freshmen, and does not provide a great deal of structured transition programming, such as extended orientation and campus visit programs. Despite these assumptions, the culture and expectations of four-year institutions are vastly different from community colleges. Many students experience "transfer shock" (Hills 1965), which is defined by a drop in grade point average at the new four-year institution. In addition, a larger percentage of native students persist to graduation than transfer students (Bulkley, 1974; Hills, 1965).

However, the transfer shock literature does not even begin to tell the full story of transfer student transition. Academic performance is one minor part of students' experiences, and grades are the result of a process that has occurred throughout the semester. The transfer shock literature shows information on academic grades, but not on how these grades were achieved. In addition, the literature is relatively void of research on the transition that transfer students undergo within the social culture and physical structures of the four-year university.

A great deal of research has been conducted on freshman transition and success issues, as well as transition issues for K-12 students. However, a more limited body of research is available about transfer student transition and success. There is not a clear sense of whether or not transfer students experience transition similarly to or different from freshmen. From availability of campus services, it appears that universities may believe transfers have limited adjustment issues, but the literature is unclear. Traditional transition programming, such as orientation is much more comprehensive for freshman than for transfers. In addition, the studies on transfer students have focused on academic gains or losses, but have not dealt with transfer students' stories of their process of transition, and how they became a part of the university community over time. Before interventions can be created to assist transfer students with successful transition, there is a need to have a clearer understanding of the process of transfer student transition over time, and the ways in which they learn about and adapt to their new environment.

Due to enlarging enrollments at community colleges that have lead to increased numbers of community college students interested in transferring to four-year universities, it is important to understand this growing population of students at four-year universities. The issue of transfer shock and transition from community colleges to four-year institutions has been discussed in the literature since the inception of junior colleges, as community colleges were commonly called during the beginning of their history. There is awareness within higher education of increased enrollments in the community colleges and thus increased numbers of transfer students to four-year institutions (Cejda, 1997; Hills, 1965; Oliver, 1995; Watt, 1930). However, little is known about this increasing population. Cejda (1997) found that 80% of the community college students he studied indicated a desire to transfer and Illinois' state system reported an increase in transfer students from 28% to 39% of the total student population and from 44% to 52% of all upper division students (Bartlett, 1995). It appears four-year universities will continue to see increased numbers of applications from community college students wishing to transfer. Therefore, it is important that the community college transfer student transition process be studied further.

The desire to better understand community college transfer student transition leads to the development of many research questions that call for further investigation. The research question guiding this study is:

- What is the nature of transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university?

More specifically:

- How do transfer students' experiences change between their first and second semester at MSU?
- How are the experiences similar or different for on- and off-campus students?

Thirty-five community college transfer students participated in this qualitative study. They were interviewed twice during their second term at MSU and were asked to respond to a series of questions exploring their transitions into the university environment during their first two semesters. I utilized the concept of consequential transition, as developed by King Beach (1999) as a lens for examining student progress over time. Taking a process approach helped to enhance the existing literature, since very little longitudinal research or research with more than one data collection point has been done on transfer students. In addition, components of Tinto's (1987) theory of freshmen integration were seen in the data, especially in terms of students' experiences with the academic and social environments. With this knowledge, possibilities exist for the creation of interventions by community colleges, four-year universities as well as the students themselves to assist with successful transition. Through research, we can better assess what measures would ease the transition for transfer students.

Before proceeding to the logistics of the study, a critical review of the literature is prudent. Following the literature review and discussion of theoretical lenses that support the study, chapter three outlines the methodology of the study. Chapter four relays the data from the study as it related to the emergent themes. Finally, Chapter five presents an overview of the study as well as implications and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many factors impact the transition of transfer students from community colleges to four-year universities. In order to gain an understanding of the differences between community colleges and four-year universities and how they affect the academic success and transition of transfer students, a thorough investigation of the current literature is necessary.

The Students and their Environments

Transfer student transition fundamentally involves students as well as the collegiate environments they attend. Further explanation of community college students, as well as community colleges and four-year universities lays the groundwork for further understanding of community college transfer student transition.

Community College Students

In order to focus research on community college transfer students' experiences, it is important to understand the characteristics of community college students. The student population at community colleges is quite diverse in terms of ethnic background, goals, age, socio-economic background, and family responsibilities. A larger percentage of ethnic minorities, low-income, and nontraditional college-age students attend community colleges than four-year institutions (Laanan, 1998). Transferring to a predominately white institution can be a quite significant change. The average age of 29 for community college students is significantly higher than the students at four-year universities (Griffith & Conner, 1994). Many community college students are juggling family and significant work responsibilities with school (Dougherty, 1994). The vast majority of community college students commute to school, rather than living on campus, which leaves them detached from the campus community. The majority are also part-time students (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). The diversity of community college students and their eclectic interests make it more difficult to form peer groups, which can support their academic experience (Astin, 1993). A study of community college transfer students needs to be sensitive to the differences among students, which may impact the themes that emerge from the study. To understand how shifting environments impact students, it is important to know about the environment they are departing – the community college – as well as the environment they are moving to – the four-year university.

Community College Missions & Culture

Community colleges have very broad-based missions. They serve many different audiences, including people seeking technical and occupational training, taking classes for enjoyment, as well as those with intentions to receive a bachelor's degree. At the cornerstone of the community college mission is its open door admissions policy. Community colleges do not limit admissions based on grade point averages and standardized test scores, but rather open their doors to anyone who has a high school diploma or GED (Griffith & Conner, 1994). Therefore, community colleges allow access to higher education for many segments of the population who would otherwise not be able to attend, due to the stricter admissions policies of four-year institutions (Oliver, 1995). In addition, tuition rates at community colleges are significantly lower than those at four-year universities, which promote access to higher education for those with financial constraints. Enrollments at community colleges continue to increase, which indicates an increased expansion of access to higher education.

The academic culture of community colleges includes a large focus on students and classroom teaching. Without an emphasis on research, teaching is the primary objective of community college faculty. Cohen and Brawer (1989) explain:

> Junior college instructors were considered to be better than those in the universities because their responsibilities were only to teach, not to conduct research; their pedagogical preparation was more evident; and they were bona fide instructors, not teaching assistants (p. 149).

Class sizes tend to be small, and personalized attention of students is commonplace. Community colleges attract students with a wide range of academic abilities, from honor's program students to many who need remedial work (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). The community college curriculum and structure accommodate virtually all levels of academic ability. Therefore, students who intend to transfer have access to a wide variety of courses, many of which do not parallel what they will find at the four-year university.

Four-Year University Mission & Culture

Four-year universities have very different missions and culture from community colleges. I will specifically focus on large, state funded research-intensive universities, because while they are significantly different from community colleges, they attract a large percentage of community college transfer students. The admissions policies at state funded research intensive universities are selective, and focus heavily on standardized test scores and grade point averages. Although state-funded four-year universities are less costly than private institutions, they are significantly more expensive than community colleges. Therefore, access to four-year universities is limited to those who meet the academic restrictions, as well as the financial restraints (Tierney, 1997). In addition, four-year universities tend to have a less diverse undergraduate student population in terms of age and ethnicity than community colleges (Laanan, 1998). A large part of the mission of research-intensive universities is a strong commitment to research and graduate education. This is in contrast to community colleges, where undergraduate teaching, rather than research, is the primary focus (Cohen & Brawer, 1989). Four-year universities typically have large residence hall systems and on-campus activities. Since most transfer students are commuters, they may have fewer opportunities to integrate themselves into a university's social system (Townsend, 1995). Therefore, many structural differences are found between four-year universities and community colleges.

The academic culture at four-year universities includes strong academic rigor. Class sizes tend to be large, and students must be proactive in the educational process. Differing classroom expectations are indications of academic culture that is dissimilar at four-year universities as compared to community colleges (Oliver, 1995; Townsend & et al., 1993). Often, four-year institutions have decentralized student services offices, as opposed to the "one stop shopping" structure of many community colleges. The total full-time enrollment at four-year universities tends to be larger, staff to student ratios are larger, and the personal attention to individual students may be less than at community colleges. Many researchers have found the university to be a very different academic environment from community colleges. Townsend reflects:

> Not only are course standards usually higher, with assignments reflecting a premium on writing and critical thinking, but university students' behaviors are also different from those in the community college. (p. 188)

Townsend also discusses Boice's (1992) description of the four-year university academic environment reflecting "an almost Darwinian perspective about academic success: The academically fit will demonstrate their ability and survive, while the less fit will withdraw or flunk out" (p.189). There are higher expectations of student independence and out-of-the-classroom preparation at four-year universities. Townsend asserts that faculty might take on a "Darwinian" attitude of survival of the fittest partly because it is how they are treated in tenure decisions, which are typically a part of the culture of four-year universities and not those of community colleges.

Many researchers also found a higher level of student competitiveness as opposed to collaboration at four-year universities. Community college transfer students who were interviewed found higher academic standards at the four-year institution, and a need for their own support system prior to arrival at the university (Townsend, 1995). Not only were the academic expectations greater at the four-year university, the university students were perceived as more competitive, which reflects the academic culture of the university. Kuznak (1972) also found that reverse transfer students were more satisfied at the community college because there was less competition at the two-year college, and more attention was given to the individual student there.

Overall, it is important to understand the differences between the community colleges and four-year universities in order to appreciate the impact that moving between the two environments may have on transfer students. It is also crucial to illuminate previous research on student adjustment.

Adjustment Research

Researchers have approached the study of student adjustment in a variety of ways, including utilizing coping mechanisms to frame their studies. A large body exists for K-12 students as well as college freshmen, while more limited research has been conducted specifically on community college transfer students.

Coping Mechanisms

The processes of coping and adjustment have been studied throughout the last century. Three distinct generations of research are evidenced throughout the personality and social psychology literature (Suls et al., 1996). The first generation focused on psychoanalytic perspectives, and largely involved individuals' use of unconscious defense mechanisms, which are often considered maladaptive (Freud, 1937). The second generation largely ignored, downplayed or rejected individual differences or personality traits as influencing coping behaviors, but instead took on a transactional perspective, which focused on situational influences of coping behaviors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The third and most current generation of research started fairly recently, and looks at both situational and personality trait influences on coping strategies. It has emphasized conscious rather than unconscious trait theories, such as the Big 5 personality factors (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness: N, E, O, A, and C, respectively), which have been largely studied by Costa & McCrae (1985). In addition, a small body of research relates coping to college adjustment. The following is a more thorough discussion of the second and third generation of research on coping, since those approaches are the most relevant to studying transfer student transition.

The main body of coping literature looks at the transactional perspective of coping, the second generation of research in this field. The primary premise of this perspective is that the coping process is a transaction between the person and the environment in a given situation. Proponents of the transactional perspective reject a dispositional approach to coping. Evidence of this can be found in Cohen and Lazarus' (1979) review of studies from the 1960s and 1970s, from which they concluded that coping is more inconsistent than consistent from one situation to another, and to the extent that situational conditions affect the coping process, traits have little predictive value. In addition, when dealing with a single stressful encounter, such as grieving, a person may utilize several different coping strategies. Therefore, Cohen and Lazarus conclude that situational rather than dispositional factors determine coping behaviors.

The transactional perspective's most prevalent researchers are Lazarus and Folkman (1984), who define coping as the following:

> We define coping as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. (p. 141)

They believe in a process-oriented rather than trait-oriented approach. Lazarus and Folkman's work has three main features. First, it is concerned with what the person actually thinks or does, in contrast to what the person usually does, would do, or should do, which is the concern of the trait approach. Second, what a person does is examined within a specific context, that is, there is a need to know with what the person is coping. Lazarus and Folkman explain the third feature as follows:

> To speak of a coping process means speaking of *change* in coping thoughts and acts as a stressful encounter unfolds. Coping is thus a shifting process in which a person must, at certain times, rely more heavily on one form of coping, say defensive strategies, and at other times on problem-solving strategies, as the status of the person-environment relationship changes. (p. 142)

Therefore, coping is an ever-changing dynamic process in which the person evaluates and re-evaluates the environment and modifies behavior. Lazarus and Folkman do not believe that there is a set pattern to the coping process for individuals, but rather that the situation itself is the deciding factor.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posit that there are two broad types of coping: emotion-focused and problem-focused. Emotion-focused coping strategies are directed at the self, and can involve viewing a stressful situation differently, shifting levels of aspiration, or developing new standards of behavior. Other emotion-focused strategies include lessening emotional distress, avoiding, minimization, distancing, selective attention, positive comparisons, and interpreting positive value from negative events. Problem-focused coping strategies attempt to deal head-on with the stressor. They are directed at the environment itself, and attempt to alter environmental pressures, procedures, or barriers.

The amount of control the person believes he or she has over the situation can determine the type of coping strategies he or she will use (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Known as situational control appraisals, they can take place in two steps. Primary appraisal involves assessing what is at stake in a given stressful situation. Secondary appraisal involves evaluating what coping resources and options are available. If people believe they have some power or control of a situation, then they are more likely to use problem-focused strategies. If it is a situation that has to be accepted, and the person has no control, then one is more likely to use emotion-focused strategies. For example, Lazarus and Folkman studied college students' coping strategies before and after a college exam. Students were more likely to use problem-based strategies before an exam while they had some control, and emotional-based strategies after the exam while waiting for the grade. To measure both problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed the Ways of Coping checklist (WOC), which is a self-report measure. It is one of the most widely used coping assessments.

The major premise of the third generation of coping research is that both situations and personality explain significant amounts of variation in coping behavior. Research reflected both situational and dispositional influences on coping. One example can be seen in Parkes' (1986) research, which found that both personality and situational factors predicted direct attempts to change stressful circumstances. Gallagher (1996) concurs by noting, "it seems possible to understand the relationship between coping and objective outcomes, by taking into account individual differences (p. 427)." The development of the Big 5 personality traits highly influenced the resurgence of personality traits within coping research. The research also typically does not assume that particular coping strategies are adaptive or maladaptive, which is in contrast with the view of first generation research. Coping mechanisms have been used as the basis for many studies on college adjustment. Several examples are discussed below.

Coping And College Adjustment

Several studies have looked at coping related to college adjustment. Aspinwall and Taylor (1992) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate the impact of individual differences and coping on college adjustment and performance. They categorized three primary strategies of coping: avoidant coping, active coping, and seeking social support. They assessed that since adjusting to college is an ongoing, chronic stressor for many people, coping efforts can be detrimental to their overall success and adjustment. Therefore, since college adjustment can be both controllable and chronic, it may be especially likely to show the adverse effects of avoidant coping and the generally beneficial effects of active coping. Aspinwall and Taylor found that higher self-esteem, greater optimism, and an internal locus of control predicted less use of avoidant coping. Avoidant coping, then, predicted less successful adjustment to college. Greater optimism and greater desire for control predicted greater use of active coping to deal with the stress of entering college. Active coping, in turn, predicted better subsequent adjustment to college. In addition, social support predicted better adjustment to college. In terms of social encouragement, college students have been found to utilize informal support networks, such as friends and family, considerably more than formal support services, such as counseling centers (Robbins & Tanck, 1995). This finding may have an impact on the types of interventions that are developed for transfer students by universities.

Programs structured with peer interaction may be more beneficial.

In addition, Aspinwall and Taylor (1992) found that the effects of self-esteem and desire for control on academic performance are mediated largely by increased motivation to succeed in college. Controlling for college entrance exam scores, these two individual differences predicted increased motivation after three months of college, which, in turn, predicted higher grades at the end of two academic years. However, desire for control predicted lower grades at the end of the two-year period. Aspinwall and Taylor conclude that this may be due to the fact that someone with higher desire for control may stick with a difficult curriculum longer than someone with low desire for control.

Healthy college student adjustment has also been related to parental relationships. Anderson and Fleming (1986) found that lower scores on the college maladjustment scale were related to adolescents' perceptions of personal control over their lives, greater residential and economic independence, and positive feelings of emotional attachment to parents. Lopez (1991) also found that parental relationships related to college student adjustment. In addition, Rice et al. (1995) noted that secure attachment to parents resulted in increased success with college student adjustment. In a similar vein, Valentiner et al. (1994) found that:

> With controllable events, family support predicted adaptive coping, and coping predicted changes in adjustment. With uncontrollable events, family support related directly to changes in adjustment. (p. 1094)

Therefore, college students' relationships with their parents appear to play a role in their adjustment to college.

No research has specifically linked coping strategies to community college transfer students' transitions to four-year institutions. Research in this area would help to broaden the knowledge base within the literature. This knowledge can then be utilized to create interventions to assist in transfer student transition and adjustment.

K-12 Adjustment Studies

Although very few studies have been conducted on the process of transition of community college transfer students, many have studied the affects of K-12 students transitioning to a new K-12 school. One example is a study conducted by Causey and Dubow (1993), which measured coping strategies of new junior high school students after three weeks and again three months later. They also measured students' perceptions of the environment. Coping strategies and attitudes about the school are considered resources, which are defined as "traits, abilities, or means, both material and human, which can be used to meet demands" (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987, P. 167). Consistent with the negotiation literature, Jason et al. (1992) suggest that adjustment to the new environment may be viewed as a transaction between students, resources, and stressful situations.

Causey and Dubow (1993) used a "prospective" approach, which was originally developed by Holahan and Moos (1981) and includes a longitudinal focus. In keeping with this approach, they collected data at two time points in order to examine whether resources used initially to cope with transition predicted change over time in adaptation. Causey and Dubow looked at both global and specific measures of the environmental influences. They asked students to report on their overall perception of the school environment as well as more specific stressors that they found the most difficult personally. They found that resource variables of higher levels of approach coping (similar to Aspinwall and Taylor's (1992) active coping and seeking social support) and lower levels of avoidance coping, along with positive perceptions of school environments were in general associated with positive adaptation.

The changes in the use of coping strategies over time are important to assess. A student viewing the school environment more positively over time was related to improved adaptation. Causey and Dubow (1993) also relay the need for objective plus subjective measures of environment. In addition, they emphasize the importance of assessing general adaptation to a new school, as well as specific problematic stressors that students' experience. Finally, they recommend interventions to assist students in utilizing a greater number of approach coping skills. These recommendations could be useful when designing a study of community college transfer student transition.

Barone et al. (1993) looked at aspects of students' transitions beyond high school. They utilized the concept of ecological transition, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines as a "change in role, setting, or both" (p. 26). The relationship between persons and environment comprise the major aspects of transitions. Both person and environment bring resources to the transition. To elaborate on this approach, Barone et al:

> adopted an ecological "person-in-context" perspective in characterizing the transition from high school. Emphasis is placed on the transactions between the individual and the local context as influential in understanding both the transition process and adjustment-related outcomes. (p. 182)

Individuals bring coping and academic skills to the transition, while the environment provides formal and informal resources, such as tutoring programs and peer groups. They found that students used more informal resources rather than formal, and recommend interventions to ease the transitions of students to life beyond high school.

Barone et al.'s (1993) study was also longitudinal; they surveyed students during spring of their senior year of high school, as well as six months later. They looked at changes in use and composition of reference groups between the two times, including family, peers, and non-family adults. They also emphasized the use of social network resources in coping with the transition as well as uses of resources for seeking employment.

Although these studies do not focus on community college transfer students, components of this research provide a useful framework for studying community college transfer student transition. The use of reference groups is a component that would be constructive to assess in community college transfer students. What support networks do they use, and how does this use change over time? Change and lack of social support may hinder successful transition. An ecological model is one way of assessing both institutional and individual factors.

Freshmen Adjustment and Development

Several researchers have looked at the adjustment and integration of college freshmen into the campus community. A variety of factors have been shown to impact freshmen adjustment and development throughout their first year of college.

Vincent Tinto (1987) presented a theory of freshmen development that particularly addressed freshmen integration into the college environment. Tinto posits that integration has three distinct stages, separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation involves disassociation from high school and past communities. The transition stage bridges the old and new. This can be especially difficult if the old community is profoundly different from the new college community. Finally, for incorporation to occur, students must establish full membership in both the academic and social communities of college life. This occurs through involvement in the community. If incorporation does not happen, the student is more likely to depart. Although this model was developed for freshmen, it may hold true for transfers as well. More research is needed to see if Tinto's model relates to transfer students as well as freshmen.

Alexander Astin's (1984; 1993) Student Involvement Theory addresses classroom learning, and also includes individual student attributes, such as motivation and behavior. Astin (1984) elaborates:

> *Student involvement* refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. ... According to the theory, the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development. (pp. 528-29)

Involvement can include both in class and out of class activities, such as student-faculty interaction, involvement in the residence halls, athletics, etc. The theory is helpful with addressing the multiple influences on student learning and adjustment.

Astin (1984) found that persistence was higher for students living on campus and they were more likely to aspire to a graduate or professional degree. They were also more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities. On-campus jobs facilitated retention, while off-campus jobs hindered it. It is possible that these differences will be found in transfer students who are commuters versus residents.

In addition, involvement with faculty has been shown to be an important part of the developmental process for students that also impacts their persistence at the university. Astin (1984) elaborated:

> Frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement, or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic. (p. 304)

Similarly, Donaldson and Graham (1999) found that adult students interacted significantly with faculty and peers within the "connecting classroom". So, although they were not as involved in traditional campus activities, such as sports and student organizations, adult students were very involved within the classroom environment.

Informed by student involvement theory, Terenzini et al. (1996) found that students' out of class activities had a profound impact on student learning. Interpersonal relationships within the activities played a large role. In most cases, out of class experiences enhanced academic and cognitive learning. More possibilities for blending the academic and social realms of campus life should be explored, which include opportunities to interact with many different types of people. One positive example is that of living-learning options, which have proved successful. Internships, speaker programs, and orientation programs are other possibilities.

Students are also profoundly changed by the college experience. Pascarella and Terenzini (1994) synthesized over 2500 studies, which showed that college impacts students in many ways, including their cognitive, psychosocial, and moral development. Typically, the majority of studies that they looked at focused on traditional students at four-year colleges and universities. More needs to be known about how transfer students may be impacted, and if it is similar or different from native students.

Transfer Shock

The theory of transfer shock is prevalent in the literature on transfer students. Watt & Touton (1930) studied transfer students who entered the University of Southern California between 1922 and 1928, and a drop in grades for transfer students during their first semester at their new four-year institution compared to their grades at the community college. However, John R. Hills did not coin the term "transfer shock" until 1965. Hills utilized the work of Watt & Touton (1930) and Siemans (1943) among others in his research. Hills developed transfer shock theory utilizing "more than a score of studies conducted on students entering hundreds of colleges between 1910 and 1963" (p. 244). The main components are:

> 1. Students who enter junior colleges and transfer to four-year colleges typically experience an appreciable drop in college grades after transfer.
> 2. Usually the transfer's grades after transfer are lower than the average grades of the native students.
> 3. Often, but not always, the transfers' grades recover from the loss which occurs immediately after transfer, but the degree of recovery varies from a slight amount to complete recovery to their pretransfer level.
> 4. The transfer student seems to suffer most if he transfers into a curriculum which requires competence or training in mathematics, if he transfers into a major state university, or if he transfers from a junior college instead of from a four-year college.
> 5. The transfer will be less likely to survive to graduate than will the native student, on the average.
> 6. The transfer who does survive to graduate will probably take longer to reach graduation than will a comparable native student. (p. 244-245)

The theory of transfer shock is the premise for much of the research that followed in the years after Hills' inception of the theory.

Many researchers have found results consistent with transfer shock theory. Patricia Diaz (1992) found that 79% of community college transfers experienced transfer shock after transferring to a four-year college, particularly a drop in GPA during their first semester. Watt & Touton (1930) discuss previous studies that indicate a drop in transfer GPA during the first semester. The transfer GPA at the four-year institution was found to be lower than the transfer students' previous college work as well as lower than native students' GPAs. Decades later, Bulkley (1974) found that transfer students at Michigan State University from two-year colleges experienced a significant drop in GPA, while transfers from four-year institutions had stable GPAs. Hills (1965) also found that transfer shock was more severe for community college transfer students, than for those transferring from a different four-year institution. This is consistent with the notion that many academic cultural differences exist between two and four year institutions, as well as differences in student populations. As another example, transfer students to MSU had a lower graduation rate than native MSU students (Bulkley, 1974). The theory of 'transfer shock' held true for most students in his study, however, 'recovery' of GPA did not occur for two-year college transfers. Also, Oliver (1995) notes that Graham and Dallam (1986) found similar results confirming transfer shock. So, there is solid support of transfer shock theory in the literature. The dip in GPA that transfer students experience at their new four-year university may be similar to the dip in GPA that freshmen experience when compared to their grades in high school. However, the dip that transfer students experience may have greater impact due to their shortened timeframe at the four-year university, which allows less time for "recovery".

While many scholars agree with Hills' theory, other researchers found results inconsistent with and have harsh criticism for transfer shock theory. Siemans (1943) found:

> (a) that junior college transfers hold their own academically with the native group and, (b) that grading standards in the junior colleges seem to be about the same as those of the university for engineering students. (p. 26)

Nickens (1972) disregards transfer shock and states, "in the absence of evidence indicating that 'transfer shock' is caused by transfer, it seems inappropriate to assume that such a relationship exists" (p. 1). Even Hills in a later writing (1965) states that

> Differences in performance between "natives" and transfers cannot clearly be attributed to inadequacies of the junior college unless inadequacies of the students themselves have been ruled out experimentally or statistically. (p. 244)

There is clearly a gap in the research literature even today. A more thorough investigation of how academic preparedness relates to instances of transfer shock is needed. Nickens (1972) found no significant difference in junior college transfer's first term GPA and native students' first term junior year GPA after the variance accounted for by the results on a standardized academic achievement test was removed (Nickens, 1972). Nickens also argues that "recovery," the GPA of transfers rising in subsequent semesters after "transfer shock," may be caused in part by attrition of "poorer" students. Nickens equates the dip in GPA that was seen in some transfer students' first semester in his study to the same adjustment period that freshmen have their first semester. Perhaps there is no transfer shock, but rather standard adjustment to a new environment. Although Nickens has harsh criticism for the transfer shock theory, it has continued to be prevalent in the literature throughout the years.

Another factor that may have bearing on the observance of transfer shock is academic major. Brent Cejda (1997) found that community college transfer students at Benedictine College majoring in education, fine arts and humanities, and social sciences experienced "transfer ecstasy", that is an increase in GPA. However, he also found that students majoring in mathematics, sciences, and business experienced a statistically significant dip in GPA during their first semester, that is, transfer shock. With these findings in mind, it would be important for transfer shock research conducted in the future to break down analysis by academic discipline. Cejda does not hypothesize or elaborate on why differences based on academic discipline occurred. It is important for future studies to fill this gap in the literature, and look further into differences, including factors that help explain why they occur.

Number of credits earned prior to transfer is another individual factor that may impact transfer shock in different ways. Richardson and Doucette (1980) found increased transfer shock in students with only one year of community college credits prior to transfer, as opposed to those with two years of coursework at the community college prior to transfer. Therefore, number of credits earned prior to transfer may impact the transfer students' experience at the four-year university. Richardson and Doucette speculate why transfer students with one or two years of coursework have a lower grade point average when compared to native students:

> Transfer shock might be attributed to differential grading standards at the university and the community college or to the need for community college transfers to become oriented to the new environment and requirements of the university. (p. 47)

Therefore, a variety of factors may impact transfer student adjustment.

Although they point out a grade differential for students with one or two years of community college coursework prior to transfer, Richardson and Doucette do not hypothesize why the difference occurs. More research is needed to address the differences based on credits.

Much of the literature on transfer shock is consistent with the original theory, while other works contradict it. In addition, transfer shock is one indication of difficulty with transition, but does not illuminate reasons behind the academic difficulty. Even the studies that looked at differences in academic discipline and number of credits earned did not further elaborate or speculate why these differences occurred. Although transfer shock is a useful starting point, it is limited in scope and does not illuminate the full transfer student experience. Therefore, more needs to be known about the factors that facilitate or hinder successful transition into the new environment.

Other Community College Adjustment Studies

A few researchers have explored questions concerning the academic success of community college transfer students that move beyond the study of transfer shock, which only captures the academic component as measured by grades. The work of Barbara Townsend (1995) goes further in explaining the academic component by capturing students' perceptions of the academic environment as well as the transfer process. In a qualitative study, Townsend interviewed community college transfer students on their experiences at the four-year university and with the transfer process. Students tended to seek out informal resources, such as friends and family, as opposed to formal systems. Only one student used the community college's center established to aid potential transfer students. In addition, Townsend (1995) found that none of the transfer students she interviewed participated in the orientation provided by the four-year university, though many realized later it probably would have been helpful. In terms of their academic experiences, community college transfer students reported experiencing much higher academic standards at their new four year institution, including faster-paced courses and a heavier emphasis on writing (Townsend, 1995). Many felt that the community college did not sufficiently prepare them for the academics at the four-year university. In addition, the students in Townsend's (1995) study suggested that the academic difficulty they were having at the four-year institution was in large part due to the underprepared student population at the community college, which they believed caused lowered standards in the classroom.

While Townsend (1995) focused on academics, Frankie Lanaan's (1996, 1998) research addressed social components as well. Laanan (1998) attempted to move "beyond transfer shock" to study additional factors beyond GPA that affect community college transfer students' adjustment to their new four-year university. His quantitative study looked at academic, social, and psychological factors that impact adjustment, such as how involved the students were at the community college and the four-year university, as well as their quality of effort, which impacts their educational outcomes. Academic adjustment included GPA, the extent to which students experienced difficulty adjusting to the academic standards or expectations, as well as increased stress at starting at the four-year university. Social adjustment included the extent to which students agreed that they experienced little difficulty adjusting to the social environment at the four-year university, that they met people and made as many friends as they would like, and are involved in social activities. Laanan found that traditional and non-traditional aged students have different experiences, yet their adjustment process was similar. More profound differences were found between white and non-white students. The findings suggest that important involvement and quality of effort variables contribute to students' positive adjustment processes.

Many approaches capture adjustment, but a longitudinal approach is one way to capture transition as a developmental process. The work of Townsend (1995) and Laanan (1998) illuminated some of the factors that impact transfer student success, yet Laanan suggests further research be conducted that is qualitative and longitudinal. Although many transfer shock studies occurred over time, they were very narrow in focus. What is missing from the literature is a comprehensive look at the community college transfer student transition over time, which includes a view of the students' experiences and perceptions before, during, and after their first six months at the four-year university. Within a process-oriented study, it would also be useful to look closely at one individual factor, such as coping strategies in order to expand the knowledge gained. However, before a study can be formulated, a theoretical framework needs to be illuminated.

Theoretical Frames

Now that the individual and institutional characteristics have been explained, as well as previous research on adjustment, it is important to develop a theoretical frame for future studies. Many frameworks exist that could formulate future studies of community college transfer student transition.

Two possibilities are person-environment fit and consequential transitions. While person-environment fit has some historical significance, it was more appropriate for this study to utilize consequential transitions as a theoretical framework, as explained below.

Person-Environment Fit

One framework for studying transfer student transition is the person-environment fit theory (Caplan & Van Harrison, 1993; Kelley, 1991; Lewin, 1935). Part of the academic difficulty that transfer students face with their transition stems from an initial lack of understanding and "fit" in their new environment. Over time, as they learn about and negotiate with the environment, they can better succeed within it. Students can also change their environment through personal choices.

House (1981) outlines basic analytical principles for studying personality and social structure. First is the components principle, which states that one must adequately understand the nature of the social structure, in this case, community colleges as well as the four-year university. Second is the proximity principle, which states that one must recognize the effects of social structures are transmitted to individuals through stimuli that impinge directly on the individual. Thus, the university structure affects transfer students as they learn and interact within the system. Third is the psychological principle, which states that one must understand individual psychology adequately so that one can specify and test when, how, and to what extent the environment affects individual personality or behavior. Therefore, it is important to study how the university influences students individually.

House's principles can be utilized in the study of transfer student transition. The components principle can be applied by studying the various aspects of the university environment, including departments and campus services. It will be helpful to have a clear sense of the academic culture of both community colleges as well as four-year universities, elaborated below. The proximity principle can be utilized by studying how students utilize and negotiate the various components of the campus, and how the two different educational settings affect them differently. The psychological principle can be applied by studying the psychological influences that the university has on individual students. One such individual measure is coping skills. A study utilizing an ecological approach would be very helpful to addressing this task. However, the person-environment fit model does not fully address a process-oriented, dynamic approach. Consequential transitions (Beach, 1999) or appears to be a more appropriate framework for a study of community college transfer student transition.

Consequential Transition

Consequential transition is a developmental framework created by King Beach (1999) that looks at qualitative change over time in persons making some type of shift. According to Beach (1999):

> The concept of consequential transition involves a developmental change in the relation between an individual and one or more social activities. A change in relation can occur through a change in the individual, the activity, or both. Transitions are consequential when they are consciously reflected on, often struggled with, and the eventual outcome changes one's sense of self and social positioning. (p. 114)

Defining characteristics of Consequential Transitions include potential identity change. Lateral consequential transitions occur when an individual moves between two historically related activities in a single direction. A typical example is a person moving from school to the workforce upon graduation. Another example is community college transfer students moving from the community college to the four-year university with no intention of returning to the community college. A transition is considered "consequential" if qualitative change occurs in the individual.

The framework of consequential transitions is appropriate for use in studying transfer student transition. A consequential transition does not look to separate the person and environment, but rather to look at how their relationship changes over time. Both the person and environment are constantly changing and interacting with each other. The focus is on the developing relationship. It is possible for researchers to understand the environment by looking through the eyes of the person, and asking for his or her perspective. This is different from the traditional person-environment fit literature, which posits that person and environment must be measured separately, and does not take into account as strongly the interactive processes that persons and environments possess. A framework of consequential transitions will assist in measuring how community college transfer students learn about their new four-year university environment. Considering the relevant nature of the Consequential Transitions construct, and the limitations of Person-Environment Fit theory, I utilized Consequential Transitions as the theoretical framework for my study of community college transfer student transition.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The desire to better understand community college transfer student transition leads to the development of many research questions that call for further investigation. The research question guiding this study is:

- What is the nature of transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university?

Broken down further:

- How do transfer students' experiences change between their first and second semester at MSU?
- How are the experiences similar or different for on- and off-campus students?

Using a qualitative, design with two data collection points, I studied how community college transfer students proceeded through their first year at a four-year university.

Participants and Site for the Study

I studied a group of 35 community college transfer students during their first and second semesters at Michigan State University who had attended only one community college, and no other higher education institutions prior to transfer. The study initially had a target number of 20 participants, but more were interviewed in order to have balanced numbers of on-campus and off-campus students. Although even more students were interested in participating, the sample size was limited to 35 due to time and resource constraints, and the fact that balanced numbers of on- and off-campus students had been reached.

MSU's Office of Admissions and Scholarships provided contact information for 453 community college transfer students admitted to MSU for Fall, 2000 that had attended only one community college, transferred in 45 credits or more, were ages 18-24, and were full-time students. I recruited both female and male students in varying majors as well as fairly even numbers of both on- and off-campus students. Participants received a $20 gift certificate to the MSU Bookstore after the second interview, in order to encourage retention and compensate participants for their time. Qualifying participants were initially added to the study on a first-come, first-served basis. As the sample became larger, some interested students were not invited to participate in order to leave room for balanced numbers of on- and off-campus students in the sample.

Thirty-five students participated in the first interview. Two students were eliminated from the study after the first interview since they did not meet the study criteria as they had attended another four-year university prior to attending the community college. Three others were unable to participate in the second interview for various reasons. Thirty students returned for the second interview, and were included in the final analysis. Following a similar design pattern to Cejda (1997), participants in the sample were limited to community college transfer students who had earned 45 credits or more prior to transfer, were 18-24 years old, and who were attending Michigan State University as full-time students. Students in the study ranged from 20-24 years old, with an average age of 21. Narrowing the sample to students ages 18-24 streamlined the data, since transfer students of traditional age have different experiences than those of non-traditional age (Laanan, 1998). The credit minimum of 45 ensured that students had spent at least three semesters at a community college prior to transfer, and therefore spent significant time in the community college environment. The students in the study actually spent an average of 2.3 years at the community college, ranging from three to eight semesters. This is in contrast to students who take a few courses while dually enrolled in high school before their freshmen year of college. Full-time student status was important to ensure that students were spending a significant amount of time within the campus community.

Assessment of the data determined some of the similarities and differences among individual students. Many individual student factors had potential to emerge as significant within the data. Possibilities included academic major, age, gender, ethnicity, and type of community college attended. In the sample, seven attended a feeder community college, that is, in close proximity to the four-year university. Other types of community colleges represented included twelve suburban, eight rural, two out-of-state and one international community college. By monitoring the individual student characteristics as I built my sample of participants, I ensured that I included students who lived both on- and off-campus as participants, and attempted to have fairly even numbers of each, 14 and 16 students respectively in the final sample of 30. Many transfer students are commuters (Griffith & Connor, 1994). However, MSU's campus structure is primarily set up for on-campus students. MSU has the largest residence hall system in the country, housing 17,000 student in the halls, as well as 2486 in campus apartments (MSU, 1999). In addition, student experiences differ for on- and off-campus students (Astin, 1993). Therefore, including both on- and off-campus students in the study provided for potentially useful comparisons among students based on housing choice. I also ensured that I included participants in varying majors, including 15 students in open-enrollment majors that follow MSU's general admission criteria, such as natural science, humanities, and social science, as well as 15 students in limited-enrollment majors that have additional admission criteria of prerequisite courses and higher grade point averages, such as engineering, education, and business. Cejda (1997) found that the impact of transfer shock varied for students in different academic majors, yet offered little explanation as to why this may have occurred. Including students from varying majors helped to glean how students' transition processes varied in terms of major, and made the sample more representative of the total student population. In addition, in terms of representation, by monitoring the individual student characteristics as I built my sample of participants, I ensured that both male and female students were included in the sample, eleven and 19 respectively. Several ethnic backgrounds were represented as well. When students had the option to write down their ethnicity in a self-report, they responded: one African American, 22 Caucasian or White, one Chinese, one Hispanic, one White/Hispanic, one Vietnamese, one White/Vietnamese. Two students chose to leave the ethnicity line blank. So, of those who reported, 21% identified as persons of color. The students in the study were not asked to self-report their sexual orientation. Several participant characteristics of the final sample of thirty are shown on Table 1 below, broken down by living arrangements.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

	Campus Living		
	On	Off	Sum
Female	10	9	19
Male	4	7	11
Limited Major	5	10	15
Open Major	9	6	15
Feeder CC	0	7	7
Out of State/Country CC	3	0	3
Rural CC	4	4	8
Suburban CC	7	5	12
African American	0	1	1
Caucasian/White	10	12	22
Chinese	1	0	1
Hispanic	0	1	1
Vietnam	1	0	1
White/Hispanic	1	0	1
White/Vietnamese	1	0	1
No Report on Ethnicity	0	2	2

Michigan State University was an excellent site for the study. MSU admits the largest number of community college transfer students when compared to all other four-year institutions in Michigan. In addition, the sizes of both the campus and student population are very large, and are in stark contrast to community college campuses. The student enrollment at MSU for fall semester 1999 was 43,038. In addition, MSU's campus includes 2100 acres of existing or planned development (MSU, 1999). Therefore, the differences between MSU and community colleges are great.

Data Collection

Overall, the study was a collection of individual case studies collected over two points in time, guided by the concept of Consequential Transitions (Beach, 1999). In studying consequential transitions, it is vital to have a methodology that measures qualitative change over time. Therefore, a design with two data collection points was appropriate to assess changes over time in individual students. Since virtually no qualitative, longitudinal studies or studies with more than one data collection point have been conducted on community college transfer students, the study was exploratory in nature. Data were collected through interviews.

Interviews

The first method of data collection was a series of individual, semi-structured interviews with 35 transfer students. Students were interviewed twice over time, and asked retrospective questions in the first interview. Therefore, the two interviews captured three time points. The interview data provided a depth of understanding of the struggles and triumphs that community college transfer students experienced over time, during different parts of their transitions. Collecting a series of snapshots over time of the transition helped to create a clearer picture of the transition process overall, as well as student perceptions of the university as compared to their community college over time. Interview methodology was preferred over other forms of data collection that would gather collective data about a group of students. Having separate data on individual students about three time periods allowed for analysis of individual student's development over time. Then, by looking at the data collectively, overall themes were assessed. The changing perception of students over time was looked at closely. The interview questions were developed with the concept of Consequential Transitions (Beach, 1999) in mind, and looked to glean knowledge of the developing relationship between the students and their new four-year university environment. Beach posits that transitions are not always smooth, which may in fact be helpful to the overall developmental process. Open-ended questions within the interviews assisted in illuminating the transfer process in its true form, which may or may not be a seamless process. The interview questions were also consistent with Beach's concept since they traced the process over time (see Appendix I).

I conducted in depth individual interviews with students on two occasions. During the first interview, students were asked to think retrospectively about their experiences at the community college, as well as their expectations and aspirations of university life. Then, they were asked to talk about the realities that they experienced at the university. So, although compressed into one interview, the first interview gathered information about two points in time. The first interview took place in the first few weeks of their second semester, after students received their first semester grades, and included retrospective questions on their community college experiences as well as their first semester at MSU. The second interview took place later in the second semester, when they had time for reflection, and had also taken their first and second set of tests in the second semester. That way, students could discuss the differences between the two semesters, including their approach to social situations, academics and academic progress. The interview data were analyzed qualitatively, which helped to create a picture of the transition process over the three time periods. Tracing individual student experiences has helped to enhance and provide richness to the existing literature, and allowed for a developmental focus.

Procedures

The procedures included both a brief pilot study as well as the main study.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted with a few students in order to test out the interview protocol. Information gathered from the pilot study better informed how the main study was conducted, in terms of clarifying that the interview questions and instructions were understandable to the students. Interviews during the pilot were audiotaped to assist with the learning process.

Main Study

Since I interviewed new transfer students, I needed to locate the interviews at a convenient, quiet, and private location on campus. Each interview lasted ½-1 hour. Therefore, total time commitment for the participants was 1-2 hours. I conducted a study with two data collection points with the following timeline:

- Email to recruit students sent early spring semester, 2001
- Two interviews: One early spring semester (January, 2001)
- One late spring semester (March/April, 2001)

As a first major attempt at research, this project was both challenging and rewarding. The actual interview process was delightful. It was quite refreshing to actually be out in the field with students, after many, many months of background research and reading. It was a challenge to interview students with varying personalities and styles, and to adjust my approach to interviewing accordingly.

The interviews were audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed. In addition, I took field notes during the interviews. Dragon Naturally Speaking voice recognition software, which was utilized for the bulk of the transcribing, was a Godsend. It allowed me to dictate my interview tapes into a microphone while the computer typed for me. It did take some time to tweak the software, but the overall results were an incredible time and money saver. I also used a varying speed tape recorder to listen to the tapes slowly the first time while I was reading them into the computer headset, and quickly a second time as I double checked and made small corrections to the computer's typing. Listening to the tapes again allowed me to envision the interview and remember the student as a person. As soon as I was done with the second run through the tape, I wrote up a brief summary of the important highlights of the interview. This was essential in preparation for the second interview, and also allowed me to process and connect with emerging themes in the data. It was also essential for within-case analysis.

Analysis of Data

Following the principles of qualitative analysis, an extensive analysis of each student's data was conducted, and was guided by the concept of Consequential Transition (Beach, 1999). It was important to look at each students' individual process of transition, the ways in which they developed, and how their coping strategies played a role over time in the developing relation of the students and the environments of MSU. Once I had a clear sense of each student's individual process, I looked for similarities and differences between different students. It was important that the interviews represent a reflection of the transfer student experience. Therefore, participants had the opportunity to perform "member checks" by reviewing the transcripts from the interviews (Seidman, 1991). Although five students wished to review the transcripts and were sent copies, none reported back any necessary changes, additions, or inaccuracies.

I synthesized the data from the interviews into different themes, looking for commonalties in experiences, and grouping information into separate categories including learning resources, connecting, familiarity, negotiating, and integrating. Consistent with Beach's (1999) concept, I also looked for patterns over time, to see the movement that each student made over the course of the three time periods covered in the two interviews. Beach (1999) posits that transitions are not always smooth, which may in fact be helpful to the overall developmental process. Therefore, as I looked for patterns within the transfer process, I kept in mind that they may not be seamless.

Coding of the Data

A coding scheme was developed using the "grounded" approach, originally advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), according to Miles and

Huberman (1994). The codes were created after the first round of data collection was complete. The codes were developed after an initial run-through of the data, which allowed the codes to be more context-sensitive than they would have been prior to initial analysis of the data. The codes generated after the initial analysis of the data were later adjusted as new themes emerged, while others were combined.

Several of the interviews were thoroughly color coded by hand. Others were read through to pull out points of importance. Individual student interviews were looked at as a set of two interviews each, in order to assess individual change over time. Following the individual student analysis, the interviews were looked at as a collective whole that related to the emerging themes. Therefore, each case was looked at as an individual set, and then written up as a cumulative data analysis for the group. I chose to write about the group as a whole, yet utilized unique examples from each of the students. Text search functions within Microsoft Windows' "My Computer" as well as Microsoft Word were highly utilized to search all interview data for keywords related to the themes and findings outlined in Chapter 4.

Study Location and Recruitment

Michigan State University was an excellent site to conduct this study as the largest higher education institution in Michigan that admits the greatest number of transfer students. Having participants in the study from the nearby 'feeder school' as well as rural, suburban, out-of-state, and international schools opened up the possibility of comparison based on type of community college attended. However, no salient differences were found in the students' experiences at the community college based on type. Therefore, no analysis is presented in terms of type of community college.

MSU is committed to the academic success of its transfer students, so there was significant "buy in" for this project at all levels. Another fact that assisted with the logistics of the study was that I am a full-time member of the MSU academic staff, which left me well connected across campus. The Director of Admissions and the Assistant Director of Transfer Admissions were both willing to assist with student contact information, and are very interested in the results of my study.

Recruitment took place through a targeted emailing to community college transfer students who started MSU in the fall semester of 2000. The MSU Office of Admissions and Scholarships provided contact information for the sole purpose of recruitment for the study, in exchange for a personal briefing of the results of my study. All parties hope the results will help to impact future interventions for transfer students. A consent form was also created for participants. Both the recruitment letter and consent form are a part of Appendix II. Human subjects approval was filed with the university as well.

Limitations

Since this was a study with only a small number of participants, it was limited in scope. The study provided for depth of understanding of a small group of students, but implications for larger groups of students based on the results of this study needs to be done with caution. The uniqueness of the study is both a strength and a weakness. Since no research has been conducted on this precise topic, no specific study protocol was utilized and tested in previous studies. Participants were all from the same four-year institution, and were limited to those that chose to respond thereby making it a selective sample, which may have not included students who were struggling and did not want to talk about their struggles, for example. Although more students volunteered, sample size was limited due to time constraints and an effort to have balanced numbers of on-campus versus off-campus students. The sample was diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender. However, no analysis was done to look at similarities or difference of experience or transition based on gender or ethnicity. In addition, no data were gathered in terms of the sexual orientation of the students in the study. While havingtwo data collection points assisted in seeing change over six months, it did not measure longer-term affects of transfer. One disadvantage to my full-time employee status is that participants may have perceived me as an authority figure. However, I approached participants in my role as a doctoral student, not a full-time staff member. The interviews took place in a neutral cite that was not affiliated with the College of Natural Science where I work. In addition, some potential participants were eliminated if they were my advisees to avoid conflict of interest. Therefore, students in the majors that I advise were not recruited for the study. Finally, although it would have been unlikely, any students who met the criteria who were minors were excluded from the study.

Having two interviews is less ideal than three. However, due to when I received access to participants, only two interviews were conducted for this study. Asking retrospective questions during interview one and then conducting interview two provided a sense of three time periods, but was different than interviewing students before, during, and after their first semester at MSU. The retrospective data collected in interview one about the students' community college experiences were often comparative to MSU, possibly due to the time lapse. Asking student about their community college experiences shortly following them may have gleaned a more "pure" sense of the students' time at the community college, without comparisons to MSU. In addition, I did not collect observation data that would help triangulate the students' perceptions, which would be more ideal. However, since the students' transitions happen across so many venues it would have been difficult to capture observations for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Research Questions

Community college transfer student transition is a complex process. The desire to better understand the process leads to the development of many research questions that call for further investigation.

The research question guiding this study is:

- What is the nature of transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university?

More specifically:

- How do transfer students' experiences change between their first and second semester at MSU?
- How are the experiences similar or different for on- and off-campus students?

Using a qualitative design with two data collection points, I studied how community college transfer students proceeded through their first year at a four-year university. The following addresses the research questions in depth, as they relate to the findings of this study. Issues related to students' place of residence are included in data presented throughout the themes as relevant, rather than addressed separately.

Introduction to Themes & Additional Findings

An extensive analysis of each student's data were conducted, and was guided by the concept of Consequential Transition (Beach, 1999). According to Beach, a Consequential Transition entails a developmental change that has occurred over time that often includes a shift in identity or perception due to the relation of individuals and social situations. Consistent with Beach's concept, I looked for patterns over time, to see the movement that each student made over the course of the three time periods covered in the two interviews. The framework of consequential transitions is appropriate for use in studying transfer student transition. A consequential transition does not look to separate the person and environment, but rather looks at how their relation changes over time. Both the person and environment are constantly changing and interacting with each other. The focus is on the developing relation. This overarching construct was utilized to guide the analysis of the interview data and development of the themes.

Five themes about the process of transfer student transition emerged from the data: Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating. Each is important to the overall transition of the students in this study. They illuminate the nature of the transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university as well as the changes that occur between students' first and second semester. In addition, advice for future transfer students from the participants will be relayed.

Each of the themes interrelates to the three distinct environments of the university within which the students interacted: the academic, social, and physical environments. The academic environment includes interactions in class, with faculty both in and out of the classroom, study groups, advisors, as well as information on career opportunities. The social environment includes both formal and informal interactions with other students outside of the classroom through student organizations, parties, residence halls, apartment complexes, common areas on-campus, etc. Finally, the physical environment not only consists of the bricks and mortar of the university but also the campus organizational structure in terms of how the campus services and departments function and are organized, campus logistics, overall campus culture, and parking. In addition, the physical environment includes the finances that are required for schooling, since tuition and other expenses can be considered a structural requirement.

Transition is a socialization process that occurs over time. At some point, the transition feels "over" in the student's mind. When this happens depends on a number of factors for each individual, including the five themes of Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating that are found in this study. By utilizing learning resources, students are able to connect. After students connect, they are more familiar with the environment due to their interactions. Familiarity is related to becoming socialized and comfortable within the environment, and understanding the norms and values within the academic, social, and physical environments of MSU. Students are also aware of the negotiating process that they need to undertake in order to be successful within the environment that they are now familiar with. This facilitates their transition. In addition, for some students, a deeper theme of integrating has emerged, which encompasses a shift in perception that relates back to the student's identity. Data within the theme of integrating are very reflective of Tinto's (1987) theory of freshmen integration. While Tinto's theory encapsulates the academic and social campus environments, the data in this study also portrayed a third, the physical environment. How the themes play out will be portrayed in the discussion hereinafter. The data presentation begins with an initial discussion of the students' perceptions of the academic, social, and physical environments of the community college.

The students' words are woven into the discussion of this chapter. Quotes were chosen that best illustrate each point, and are representative of many of the interviews that were conducted. The data audit utilized is as follows: e.g., (9A, 2) represents a quote from interview 9A, page 2. Interviews marked A were from the first time period, while those marked B were from the follow-up interview. This allows the reader to assess when a student spoke. In addition, in order to protect the identity of the participants, any reference to the specific community college they attended has been eliminated from the data presented. In its place is simply, "at CC", as some students called it. Although many types of community colleges were represented in the sample, no salient differences were found in the students' experiences at the community college based on the type. Therefore, no analysis is presented in terms of type of community college. Specific reference to student major at MSU is included, since experiences varied in terms of size and culture of the major. In addition, when students say "there" they are referring to the community college, and when they say "here" they are referring to MSU. With these points in mind, here are their collective stories.

Community College Experiences

To start, the students paint a picture of their experiences at the community college within the academic, social, and physical environments. This provides a context and foundation for their experiences at MSU. Further understanding of the community college environments informs the discussion of the five themes as they relate to the students' MSU experiences.

Academic Environment at the Community College

Students' experiences help to explain their perception of the academic environment at the community college. One student struck upon many academic components at her community college when she said:

> I went to CC for two years, four semesters. It was the best move. I highly recommend anybody going to the community college instead of a big university. A lot of the basic classes they teach at community colleges are more one-on-one and you get a lot more out of it than you would at a major university. Especially, I am a biochemistry major and I had a lot of chemistry and math classes at the CC. It's more one-on-one so you understand the basics before you get into these big classrooms where you're just a number instead of an actual person. (30A, 1)

Class size and relationships with faculty were highly valued.

> The classes were a lot smaller. They were sorta the same as my high school with 30 people in the class. And there was really a lot of interaction between you and the teacher; it wasn't all a lecture. (25A, 1)

Community colleges tend to utilize faculty as opposed to teaching assistants for instruction. Students believed that the faculty were highly invested in teaching and getting to know students.

> I liked the teacher-class ratio. It was no more than thirty students

> in a class, and you really got a lot of one-on-one time with the teachers if you wanted it, and the teachers never looked down on you. They weren't some "higher power", like I've noticed with some of the professors. The professors at the community college, I'd say probably fifty percent of them had their Doctorates, so they weren't undergrads or anything. (6A, 1)

Community college courses were typically well attended. One student believed that class size impacted class attendance. "At the community college you would have probably 90 percent of turnout in classes. And here it's probably around 50 percent or 60 percent, just over half unless there is an exam (1B, 2)." Students also noted that faculty got to know them and made sure they understood the material.

> Most classes were a lot like here I would say. It was positive, only one out of all of them I took wasn't very positive. So that was really nice. They were very willing to help. They would help you; they don't leave you out there on your own. They would challenge you. (17A, 2)

The classrooms had a very welcoming atmosphere. One student spoke for many when she said, "It wasn't as competitive (5A, 1)." The students felt comfortable in the classroom and interacting with faculty.

Their community college experience laid the foundation for university work. Based on the culture of their community college coursework, many students felt well equipped for the academic content at MSU.

> I feel like they prepared me really well for the classes here. There's no lag in knowledge... They pushed you to do your best and to pursue excellence. In a lot of cases, I think I worked harder at CC than at MSU, because of the smaller classes there, and the more one-to-one ratio that you have with your instructor, and you gain a lot more push. (1A, 1)

Another student portrayed the academic quality of her community college experience this way:

> I think a lot of the teachers had high expectations. They didn't think that, "oh you are at a community college. You don't have to

> try as hard," because they knew these classes were going to transfer to a university. So I think they pushed just as much as what the teachers expect here. I think you get more of a one-on-one thing than you do here; all my teachers down there knew my name. If I ran into them I'm sure they would know who I was. But here, some of my teachers I know they wouldn't know who I was. They might be like "hey, I think that girl is in one of my classes", but they wouldn't know who I was. That's why I went to the community college first because I thought it would be a better transition than just coming up here, especially being from a smaller town, where I didn't really want to jump in here and be in a big class and be exposed to that. (24A, 2)

Overall, the small classes and dominant interaction with faculty were seen as strong assets to the community college academic experience.

Social Environment at the Community College

The social environment at the community college was comprised of both formal and informal interactions within and outside of the classroom. For some, the social environment at the community college assisted them socially and academically.

> I met a lot of friends there, some friends that also continued on over here.... I mean I met some friends who I wouldn't have gotten through the class without them, who helped me study and have a social life. It was wonderful. (20A, 2)

Some students were heavily involved in the formal social structure of the community college, including student organizations and campus events.

> I was in an organization called Phi Theta Kappa, which is an international honors society of community colleges, and I served as an officer for a couple of different positions within that organization. We did a lot of the service events and stuff like that. I was also in that jazz band and in concert band. I played in the pit for a play. I was pretty involved there. (21A)

There were also many ways that students were involved socially at the community college in an informal way. The majority of the students connected with both students and faculty, creating a type of social environment around the classroom. When asked if she got to know students at the community college, one student responded:

> Eventually yes, the same people started showing up in classes, and then people transferred here, people with the same plans so we were in the same classes. After the first semester, those were the people that I pretty much stayed with the rest of the time I was there. (17A, 1)

This student was able to develop a social network through classroom connections. Some students connected socially by working at the community college, as well.

> I worked on-campus and I met a lot of people there and actually I liked it a lot... I really wasn't involved in organizations or anything, but I think I had more friends there, and I had a job, so I was able to make friends. (15A, 1, 6).

Many students did not have social involvement at the community college beyond the classroom due to their commonly off-site work obligations and the constraints of commuting.

> I met a lot of people and on breaks and stuff we'd sit around and talk but I was working so much I really didn't have time to do anything outside, which is one of the nice things about coming here, to have the opportunity to have more social time. (5A, 1)

Some students felt isolated socially at the community college. "Socially...it was just my friends from before, but nobody at CC; it was just me" (7A, 2). Many students were very focused on academics and did not want to be involved in other ways at the community college. "I didn't want to be there any longer than I really had to, so I didn't get into any of the sports or activities per se. Basically I wanted to get my education and get out (9A, 1)." While some students were involved socially in formal or informal ways at the community college, others used the community college simply to attain their educational goals.

Physical Environment at the Community College

The structure of the community college was conducive to students academically, logistically, and financially. Almost all the students chose the community college for its affordability.

> I went to CC because the price was right. When you compare the price of a university to a community college, it was a third of the cost, and then you can transfer over after two years. Since I've been paying for the tuition all myself, it was the best way to do it. (1A, 1)

Transfer students in this study perceived that they took a larger responsibility financially for their education than native students, and this often influenced their decision to initially attend the community college. "I had to pay for my own tuition, so the financial aid [at CC] was right. I didn't have to pay anything out of my own pocket for the time being, so that's where I decided to go" (20A, 1). Many transfer students voiced frustration at the lack of understanding of native MSU students to their financial situation.

> Sometimes I get annoyed by the kids who are like, "oh, I've never had a job, my parents are paying for everything, they bought me a new car", which is because I have a job and I pay for my own car and I live on my own. I don't even live with my parents anymore. I'm a lot more independent than I think a lot of college students are, whereas at CC a lot of people were independent like that, so you get a different feel for that. (24B, 7)

The community college campus structure enabled students to gain an affordable education that fit into their lifestyle. Students enjoyed the flexibility of class scheduling that allowed them to work.

> It's actually a really good community college. I got a lot out of it. It was nice because I could take a lot of evening classes and have a three credit course and only have to go one night a week so I could still work full-time. (5A, 1)

Ease of parking and navigating the small campus environment at the community college were seen as perks of the physical environment.

> It didn't cost anything to park. That was cool. I liked that. That was definitely cool. I get here [to MSU] and I have to work because I have to be able to afford to park. And there's not as many people. There's millions of people here, and there it was a lot smaller community. (7A, 2)

Overall, students were satisfied with the small yet comprehensive campus environment of the community college.

> Overall, I enjoyed the community college and I'm glad. Then when I came here I look back and I ... I don't think I would have been able to come as a freshman and handle it. I look at some of the freshmen now and I don't see how they manage, I really don't. (9A, 2)

The students generally had positive experiences at the community college as a stepping-stone to MSU. Their community college experiences provide a backdrop for the discussion of the primary themes of transition below, which speak to their experiences at their new four-year university.

Learning Resources

Students used a variety of learning resources to gain knowledge at MSU that lead to success and satisfaction in the environment. Learning resources are defined as the variety of tools that the students utilized in order to gain information and learn about the campus environment and academic system. One student spoke to the combination of learning resources that students employed almost simultaneously, and in conjunction with each other. This student blended his use of learning resources to find out about campus services.

> I didn't know about any [campus services] before I came here. Most of the ones I've learned about now have been through the clubs, mostly. That's been a way for me to talk to people who've been here for a couple of years. They've shown me a lot of the

> things I needed to know. Then just through my classes; my instructors telling me different places to go. Then through that, it's made me kind of explore other options and find out what I know. (6A, 7)

Three types of learning resources emerged from the data. These were formal and informal learning resources and initiative, which are explained in depth below.

Formal Learning Resources

For the purposes of this study, formal learning resources are part of the official campus structure. They include orientation programs, welcome week activities, campus maps, web site, the student newspaper, as well as employees of the university, such as faculty, advisors, staff, and TA's. From formal learning resources, the students gained a variety of information. One student shared how specific university activities targeted at transfer students helped with the transition to MSU.

> During welcome week, they had special programs for transfer students where you would learn about parking and those kinds of things. And they had something where you meet your college or something and I went there and that really helped explain everything you could get involved in and they introduced people, like the chairs and the professors. And that's where I heard about FCE club, the family and child ecology club. So I joined that and that was really helpful because people that I met at orientation were child development majors too, and so there were about two or three of us and we started going to that together. That was really helpful, too, with the transition. I think it went really well. (17A, 3)

Faculty in major courses are helpful in relaying information about upcoming events relevant to the major. This learning resource is more intensely useful for students who have multiple major courses during the semester. "I think having more classes in my major helps me to be more informed too instead of just having one class because we have more opportunities for people to tell you about things going on." (17B, 2) In addition, residential programs at MSU help to make the big place smaller.

> I'm really glad I got into Lyman Briggs School, and they are really helpful with just about any problem that comes up, you can get a solution. They're more than willing to help out... I think at MSU, that one major advantage is that they have their residential colleges. That gives you a group you can fall back on. (1A, 4)

The transfer orientation program at MSU was a one day program, which included both general information sessions, as well as sessions broken down by major. Orientation received mixed reviews from students. When asked about orientation, one student responded, "Oh wow, it was an experience. I can't say I enjoyed it. Really tedious. I guess it was good to learn how the University functioned in a sense. It was a long day." (20A, 3) Orientation gave students the opportunity to meet other transfer students.

> At orientation I was kind of nervous or whatever. But I got here and I think it was really good that they do all transfer students at one orientation because you really get to know people, and you don't feel very much alone when you see hundreds of people that are doing the same thing you are doing. And I actually ran into a lot of people that were people I had in classes at CC. I ran into them at orientation or whatever, and we ended up having more of the same classes. (17A, 3)

Some did not believe that orientation prepared them for the realities of campus life. "They really didn't seem to have that much for the orientation for what we should expect type thing or what we'd be getting ourselves into... by coming here." (9A, 6) Conversely, others thought orientation covered information that they already knew.

> The orientation day, AOP here, lasted a whole day. I thought that was a little bit long. Coming from a... community college or college or school, there are things you already know about college and you don't really need to sit through again ... And the thing was ... that they charged money for that, too. And I think the only thing

> they need to keep there, that was actually very nice, was being able to sit down there and talk with someone about your schedule. That was the best part of the whole thing. (1A, 3)

Many students emphasized that the meetings with advisors and other students in their major were the most useful part of the orientation.

At orientation, students were given a transfer credit evaluation form, indicating how their community college credits translated to MSU credits. However, students were still confused about transfer credit, especially the way it was presented to students in a written form that was perceived to be very complicated.

> I think their orientation wasn't very informative. They just assumed that we knew everything. And we assumed that, the paper that they showed us that said these classes transfer and these don't. That really didn't tell me anything, even when they tried to explain that. (15B, 7-8)

Web sites, used before and after transfer, proved to be helpful resources for many students to find campus information.

> MSU makes it so easy to find information about the school. And the website is fabulous. It's really good and I have looked at so many of them because I've been researching grad schools already. (27A, 7)

The MSU Transfer Course Equivalency web page was especially beneficial because of the importance of course transferability to the students interviewed.

> I used the MSU equivalency website to double-check to be sure the credits were going to transfer. I then took the pages I printed there, and came and talked to the advisor to make sure what the web had told me was true and current. I did that almost every time a semester started at the community college. (16A, 6)

Students reported that maps were also useful in learning to navigate the campus. "I did the usual freshman transfer student map thing, where you walk around with your map for the first two weeks or so." (5B, 6)

Academic advisors were another formal learning resource that two-thirds of the students used to get information. "My advisor was a big help before I got here and still he helped me out... I went to him a lot and asked him questions about Study Abroad, co-ops and different things like that (7B, 7)." Another student shared, "I've learned to go a lot to my counselors, either for chemistry or for education with questions, especially this semester. I've probably stopped in and seen both of them a couple of times this semester. They are helpful (4B, 8)." Advisors were also a strong learning resource prior to transfer for those who took advantage of an on-campus visit before starting at MSU.

> I came over here and talked to the advisors a couple of times. They were really helpful they gave me information and I met other people and that helped me even more, things like that. They showed me how to get on the Internet and see what would transfer so I would know before I took classes. (17A, 2)

Advisors provided a variety of information. For many, advisor e-mails were a very helpful source of information for students about campus activities, regulations, and deadlines. When asked how she learned about campus services, one student replied:

> I probably learned [about campus resources] when I talked to [my] advisor, the CE advisor and I asked him a lot of questions about stuff like that and he told me. And then he e-mails all the kids sometimes just in general, things like scholarships and stuff, information like that. (7A, 6)

Students were also relieved to meet with their advisor to map out a course plan so they would know their timeline for graduation. When asked what things or people helped the most with the transition and learning about MSU, one student replied:

> Well this semester my advisor now. He is great, 'cause I switched majors... He is so helpful. You make an appointment, he is so friendly and stuff and he'll go through [the major requirements]. I'm so happy, I got my schedule planned out for the next two years, so I know exactly what's going on, what I am going to be doing ... that helps a lot. (9B, 10)

Some students developed deeper relationships with their advisors, while others saw advisors as a learning resource that can be utilized in times of need.

> The advisors that I've had have been very good, as far as making sure I understood what I needed to accomplish to change [my major], and what I would need for my degree, that kind of thing. That helped me get to know the advisors. Unless you have a problem, you don't necessarily go to your advisor. So it kind of introduced me to them. (12A, 8)

Overall, advisors were seen as a very helpful learning resource in terms of campus, major, and career information and opportunities.

MSU is a decentralized environment, with services very spread out throughout campus and academic units operate independently. One student's advising experience evidenced this.

> I have to meet with three different advisors because they can't answer questions about the other requirements. Lyman Briggs can't answer any questions about the natural sciences, and natural sciences can't answer any questions about them, and neither can answer questions about premed. So I have to see three people, so it's a lot of correspondence. (1A, 6)

To varying degrees, formal learning resources proved helpful to students' transitions.

There are also many examples when lack of information about formal learning resources negatively impacted the students' experiences. Finances were a primary concern for the majority of the students, and students were not always aware of the true cost of schooling, which at times negatively influenced their lives as students. Many students were caught off guard by the hidden expenses that incur by being in school. For one student, lack of scholarship information was problematic.

> There is some scholarship information I would have liked to know about. I would have liked to know a little more about the financial end of the school, how much it really costs after tuition and housing and all that stuff. (20B, 4)

Another area in which lack of knowledge had an impact was housing. For one student, lack of a formal learning resource and information on how the local housing market works led him to renew his housing contract, although he preferred moving off-campus the next year. "I signed up to stay [on-campus] next year because I didn't realize that you had to find an apartment in November for next year, so I'm hanging around here" (6B, 2).

Some of the formal learning resources, such as Welcome Week activities, were not specifically designed for transfer students and made the students feel somewhat marginalized.

> It kind of made me feel like a freshman again coming in. I mean throughout our college of natural resources they had dinners and stuff for the freshman and somewhat transfer students but it was more geared towards the freshman. I was sitting there going OK, and they're sitting there talking saying, "yeah you'll be here for another four years." But I was like, "No, I won't. I'm not planning a being here for that long." So it's kind of geared more towards the freshman. (9A, 3)

Transfer students missed out on formal learning resources that were available to freshmen. Since the services available to new students varied for freshmen and transfers, there were times that transfer students felt a disadvantage. For example, some felt they could have benefited from the services and tours designed for freshmen.

> I think that during welcome week they had something for freshman like a tour of the library and how to use the materials in the library and things like that, which coming in from a community college you do kind of know some of the things and you know how to use their libraries, but I think if they would have included transfer students in with that too, that would have been really helpful. To have been taken on that tour, especially with the size of this library, that would have been really helpful. It would have brought those things up for new people, new students. (17B, 5)

In part because of the difference in services available, it was sometimes difficult for transfer students to find the appropriate formal learning resource or to get the necessary information they believed new freshmen were provided.

> I know it's kind of hard to take people on tours, of pretty much the main areas, but that would have helped me, in the beginning, at least, if someone gave me a tour... because in order for me to get my parking pass for F lot, just ten minutes away from my dorm room, I had to stand in line like at three in the morning to get my parking pass, because my mom called and called and said, "How do I get this parking pass?" and no one would give her any information. I think, even before you even go here, nobody really wants to help you out, like with information. (15B, 4)

Overall, formal learning resources assisted students in a variety of ways. At the same time, lack of knowledge of formal learning resources had a negative impact on some students.

Informal Learning Resources

Students talked a lot about people who were important in providing information during the transition process but who were not university employees. These resources were knowledgeable about the campus in a variety of ways, including the academic, social, and physical environments of the campus, so were important to categorize. Deemed "informal" because they were not university designees, they included roommates, classmates, students known prior to arriving at MSU, alumni, as well as contacts at the community college such as faculty and advisors.

Roommates were a primary source of information and support for students, and one of the most commonly used informal learning resources.

> I was worried about finding my way around because it's so much bigger than anything I've ever been at before. But the day before class started, my roommates took me around campus and showed me where my classes would be so that I wasn't that scared. (25A, 3)

Many students were very happy that they had friends that were already students at MSU. These friends proved wonderful assets for the transfer students.

> I think it would have been different had I not known anybody here, but because I did know so many people here I really depended on them, on the people I already knew here, like my friend .... We had so many classes first semester. He was pretty much my guide as far as to where everything was. Because we had the same classes together I just followed behind him like a little puppy dog, everywhere I would go. (5B, 6)

Current students already knew the ropes, and it was easy for them to share their experiences with transfer students, especially in terms of how campus services work. As an example, one student benefited from his girlfriend's knowledge of the bus system.

> I was introduced to the bus routes by my girlfriend, who rode the bus a time or two, and I'd never ridden the bus ... until this semester. So she took me on that, and I didn't know how it worked, but it was nice to have someone there to actually show me, like, you give them your quarter, sit down, right as you get to the stop, just pull the cord. I was like, that's really nice. I wish someone was there to show me that at the beginning of the year. .... My learning experience for the semester: how to use the bus. (11B, 5)

Informal learning resources were used over time. Knowledge was gained throughout the year.

Students found out a great deal of information from casual interactions with other students. Word of mouth was a heavily utilized informal learning resource, especially in MSU's large, decentralized atmosphere.

> It is very difficult here to find out what's offered to the students, 'cause there is so much. You don't know what building to go to, who to speak to. The handbook helps a little bit, but it is still not all in there. You kind of hear stuff word of mouth, oh, oh yeah I didn't know that existed. Even with my pharmacology class this semester, there is a tutor, I guess, that works for free and I just heard about it through word of mouth. And at CC that kind of stuff usually got discussed in class or whatever. (20A, 8)

Word of mouth assisted with general information, classroom specifics, as well as finding out about important unique opportunities.

> I found the job I'm working at right now, just through word of mouth. Somebody I knew in another lab at Natural Resources told me somebody else needed an aide, so that's how I found that. (6B, 4)

Sometimes contacts outside the university directed the student to formal resources on-campus.

> I came and saw my advisor here.... I saw him the second year I was at CC. The only reason I got introduced to him was because I had connections with a high school ag science teacher that said, "oh, you should talk to him". (24B, 3)

Overall, students felt they were greatly assisted by utilizing informal learning resources throughout their time at MSU.

Initiative

Another type of learning resource that students utilized was their own initiative. Part of transfer transition was not about what students could be told or shown by others, or what they could read about. It was something they had to experience and figure out for themselves. Initiative is something that students seek out on their own, such as actively striking up conversations, eavesdropping, wandering around, as well as trial and error. It also speaks to students' own motivation to seek out information and to do the work it takes to be a successful MSU student. Initiative is an internal learning resource, as opposed to formal and informal learning resources, which are people and things found externally. One student demonstrated the importance of initiative.

> I guess I've just been lucky. Just trial and error. I just guessed and thinking maybe I should do this and it's been right. So far I haven't screwed up. And I just keep eavesdropping on people and seeing what everybody else is doing and I just ask questions and

> try to read as much as I can, like anything that comes out on the Web site and stuff. I try to look at the web sites at least once every two weeks, the College of Ed and Human Ecology [web sites] and try to check out things just to make sure there's been like no changes or anything like that. Really, that's how I've learned how to play the game I guess. Just eavesdropping, be aggressive and try to find things out of my own, and not just let them come to me. (3B, 4)

Another student also emphasized the utility of initiative, including the importance of seeking out information. When asked how she learned about the environment at MSU, she reported a combination of informal learning resources and initiative.

> A lot of trial and error, like where to park I figured out by coming in and trying it and where the computer labs are, I wandered around till I found it or I asked people. Or my roommates would give me tips. You don't really think about these things very much like where you can park at certain hours and stuff like that, little stuff that it's hard for a teacher or somebody to help you with that kind of stuff. It's kind of something that you just find out. Or how the roads go which is kind of crazy sometimes, about which way to go down or how to get from here to there, the fastest way and stuff like that. It's just all I learned about this year I guess. (24B, 4)

Initiative speaks to the proactive nature of the transition for students. They found it necessary to seek things out on their own.

> A lot of that stuff I think is me being proactive instead of anybody sending me a letter saying, "hey, I'm your advisor, talk to me", which I don't know if the College of Ed or any of the colleges are like that. It would be nice if they were a little more helpful but on the other hand I went on the website and I know what classes I need to take and the order I need to take them in. (24B, 7)

It was also important to remain alert to find out vital information, and to vigorously seek it out. One student describes how she learned new information:

> Just by like listening to other people and I think eavesdropping is such a big part of that because some my classes are with juniors and seniors and last semester I was still a sophomore. But now I know when you hit junior status you need to go and get your packet and start taking your teacher certification tests. And so I was like oh, nobody told me that but I just heard. So I was like, alright, I'm going to be on top of that. So I keep my ears open and

> listen to other people's conversations just anywhere, like in the library or anywhere. Or just ask people, I learned I can ask people in my classes or my teachers. (3B, 4)

Overall, initiative was vital for a successful transition. In addition, students must actively seek them out and utilize formal and informal learning resources. Table 2 illustrates the primary learning resources that students utilized to learn about the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU.

Table 2. Learning resources students utilized to learn about MSU

Formal part of campus structure	**Informal**	**Self/Individual Effort**
Orientation	Roommates	Trial & Error
Welcome Week Activities	Classmates	Eavesdropping
Faculty at MSU	Students they knew prior to arriving at MSU	Wandering around
TA's	Alumni	Striking up conversations
Advisors at MSU	Advisors at CC	
Maps	Faculty at CC	
Web sites		
Student newspaper		

Connecting

Connecting is defined as the ways in which students are engaged within the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU. Whereas learning resources by themselves helped students to gather knowledge and provide vital information about the environments, connecting represents a quality relationship with someone, a person they got to know and interacted with, as opposed to simply an information source. Connecting moves students towards a sense of belonging within the classroom, the social structure, and the MSU community overall. Students utilized a variety of settings as well as formal and informal structures within the environment in order to connect with the MSU community. Throughout the interviews, students reinforced a need to be

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

outgoing and proactive in order to interact and succeed within the various environments at MSU. Meeting people was the first step to developing relationships and thereby connecting. Types of connecting include Academic, Social, and Physical. The data help trace patterns over time with the ways in which students connected within the university environment. The following relates how students were connecting to the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU.

Connecting-Academic Environment

Academic connecting includes the ways in which students connect within the classroom, and with faculty, classmates and advisors regarding academic issues. Therefore, a variety of players are at work within the academic environment, and assist as students connect. Academic connecting includes formal structures, such as group projects, faculty walk-in hours, getting to know instructors in class, and class discussions. In addition, examples of academic connecting that are more informal or require initiative include forming study groups and striking up informal conversations with classmates.

Connecting in the academic environment differed for students, sometimes based on class size. Small classes often offered more opportunity for interaction and class discussion, which enabled students to get to know and develop deeper relationships with their professors and fellow classmates. For some, increased opportunities for connecting in smaller classes led to higher grades than in their large lecture courses.

> It's just a lot different than community college. I'm definitely still finding that out. The smaller classes and the more I'm learning and the more I'm into it and just better grades I'm getting. You can see a big correlation between grades and class size, like big

> time you can see the correlation. You can definitely see the difference, I'm in the lecture halls for two or three of them and those are my lower grades. And my TE classes, which have about 30 people in them, those are the ones I'm getting 3.5 and 4.0 in just because I work so close with the professor and the doctoral student; one of them is a doctoral student. I can work with her and they are so energetic and they love so much what they are doing, you can just tell they love it, and that makes a big difference because one of the teachers you can just tell that they are just doing it and they don't really seem passionate about that, which makes it hard to study. (3B, 1)

Others developed strong connections even in larger classes by connecting to those directly around them, and by sitting in the front as a means of connecting more easily to the instructor.

> I sit right in the front, so all the people behind me, so I don't even realize it is a big class anymore. Just sit in the front, take my notes and do my work and make friends with the people sitting around me, 'cause once you go to class no one really switches their seating. There is no assigned seating, but no one ever moves. Everybody sits in their same spot. You get to know the people around you, maybe get together and study and stuff. And then the class seems small. It seems like it is just those people around you and the teacher, and it doesn't seem so great and overwhelming. (19B, 15)

TA's were frequently utilized by students, and often made academic connection easy due to their accessibility. TA's were often in charge of smaller recitation and lab sections, which facilitated connecting.

> I think you become closer to the TA's. You see them more often. If you have questions, that's who you go to to ask questions. They kind of get to know your name, where the professors you probably only see them once or twice a week. (4B, 5)

Students also connect to the academic environment by developing relationships with faculty members outside of the classroom. One student notes the positive impact of doing research with a faculty member.

> He made me feel confident in myself. Because I was thinking why did he pick me kind of thing and I was okay, well I'm a good student, so I think that's helped out a lot. He's really a nice guy. (7B, 8)

However, some students felt that they missed out on opportunities to deeply connect with faculty since they were not at MSU their first two years. This was especially difficult when needing letters of recommendation.

> I'm having to get reference letters. They want you to have a couple of them, and its really tough for me, because I missed out on two years here, ... to go to instructors and say, "can you write me a reference letter?" because he really doesn't know me. I will have two from CC but you know, there again when you're just going for two years and splitting, you don't have a real good basis to get to know instructors or professors to get reference letters from them for you. That's been I think the biggest disadvantage for me. (1A, 3)

One particular form of connecting that students enjoyed occurred within their major. They liked that the courses in their major included students with the same interests. This was a change from the community college where students with an assortment of interests all took the same general education courses. The focus in the major courses allowed students to connect with the material as well as faculty.

> The classes are actually larger but I'd say I interact more with the material than I did at CC. The professors are really friendly, and they are really available to you and they try to have you stop by in their office hours. And the material seems to be a lot more interesting. I guess a lot of the stuff at CC is probably a review from high school, whereas now you are kind of interested in stuff, it is more interesting. But I guess basics are out of my way too, so it is, you know, I don't have to take any more science; that's not my interest. Kind of in your field now. So I really enjoy my classes. (29B, 3-4)

Most importantly, relationships with fellow students in the classroom assisted connecting with the academic environment as a whole. Students reported noticeable changes after they got to know their classmates and felt they had an academic support network.

> I guess I just feel like because of my roommates and I'm more involved in my major and I know more of the people. I feel like they know me and they are concerned about me more whereas

> last semester I just kind of felt like nobody would really care if I didn't go to class because nobody would notice. Whereas this semester, people would notice and they would be like, "hey, why weren't you in class?" And that just goes along with my animal science class. I have a few people I sit with now, whereas last semester I didn't really know the people in my class so I didn't really have anyone to sit with. So I just kinda sat there or whatever. And that helps too because then if I do miss class I can always get notes from them or they can fill me in and stuff. And it makes me feel better because I feel like somebody cares about me. Whereas last semester it was kind of like, I was just kind of here and you know, I'm just really glad I made it through the semester. (24B, 5)

Study groups and group projects also proved helpful for students to connect academically. For example, students' informal conversations with classmates sometimes lead to the formation of more formal study groups that met outside of class.

> Most of the time, you go in the class, we sit in the same spot, especially if it is only a small class and then you end up talking to [fellow students]. So, I guess just kind of ask them questions like, "Hey, do you understand what the professor was talking about last Tuesday?" And they'll ask you questions and you kind of just start talking like "why don't we just get a study group together?" (14B, 8)

Overall, connecting within the academic environment enhanced students' success in coursework and made them feel engaged in the academic life of MSU.

Connecting-Social Environment

Connecting to the social environment includes the ways that students are engaged in extracurricular activities and informal relationships with other students outside the classroom. Some examples of social connecting that are a part of the formal MSU structure include student organizations, intramurals, spectator sporting events, plays, concerts, and speakers. Examples of social connecting that are more informal or require initiative include conversations on busses or in public areas, parties, bars, new friends, or MSU students known before transferring. Many students already knew MSU students, and were able to connect with them immediately upon arrival at the university. "I had some friends down here, which it is nice to hang out with them" (4A, 3). Friends who were already MSU students also helped the new transfer students to expand their social circles and activities.

> I have a good friend who is a mentor at Hubbard and he's been telling me to go to this and that and hang out over there and meet a lot of people and I have a really good friend that's in a band and they're all like from MSU so I've been going to see them. And meeting people in the band and other bands has been fun. (19B, 2)

There are also many ways to connect socially through residence halls and meeting students around campus, without being in formalized clubs.

> I don't really involve myself with the academic clubs as much as I have and the social clubs as much as I did the semester before. I kinda dropped out of the sunshine club where they put up posters for people's birthdays because I don't have time to draw posters and hang them all up anymore. It hasn't affected my social life or anything; I just don't have the clubs anymore. (30B, 2)

Over one-half of the students were involved in traditional extracurricular campus activities, which facilitated social interaction. Participating in clubs associated with majors also facilitated connecting to future career goals. Therefore, social connections sometimes lead to academic rewards, such as internships and connections to faculty in an out-of-classroom environment.

> I've gotten involved in three clubs now. I'm an officer in one of the clubs, so I've met a lot of people that are in my field, and a lot of professors in my field. I'm going to try to get an internship this semester, hopefully. (6A, 4)

This student went on to say he acquired a part time internship during the semester, which further connected him to faculty and career goals.

In terms of social connecting, many felt that they were trying to integrate socially in a later timeframe than their native peers, which added to the challenge of meeting people and developing quality relationships.

> I think probably my biggest challenge, and I don't know if you would think of this as a challenge but the people I know who have been here and this is their second-year or third-year here, just kind of finding your niche. But so many people have known each other already, and you know you kind of come onto the scene. Making friends has been kind of, I don't know it's different. You're just kind of late. So meeting a core of people that I spend time with or are really good friends with has been not so easy. (27A, 5)

Some academic programs facilitated social interaction due to smaller class sizes that made getting to know classmates easy. In addition, students had numerous opportunities to get to know each other because they were taking multiple classes together each semester. "The nursing program is very fraternal. I mean there are a small number of us and we do everything together, so it is a great way to make a lot of friends" (20B, 2). For some students, discussion of getting to know classmates was more prevalent during the second interview. One student who did not report knowing many new people during the first interview, had a different response when asked during the second interview if he had gotten to know people:

> Yeah. Especially through my chemistry major. We see each other like every day between the two or three classes that we have a semester together. So I've made a lot of friends that way. And yeah, I still hang out with a lot of friends from [home] that are down here. ... Pretty much the same amount of people. I think the people I've met first semester, I'm getting closer with them, hang out a little bit more. (4B, 2)

So, over time and with increased exposure, the student developed deeper relationships with other students.

The size of the campus is seen as both an asset and a liability to connecting within the community. At MSU, students spoke of a need to actively seek out opportunities. One student explains:

> Socially, ... I wish it could be better, but it might just be my personality, too. I'm not real social, but sometimes, ... before I was really looking at the size of the university as an opportunity for the different things that you have available, but now I kind of see it as an impediment to making strong relationships with people. It's really hard to find a tight knit group of friends, or people really like you. Just being so many people, it's really hard to find people really compatible with you. So that's one of the challenges I've had to face. (6B, 1)

Students reported that classmates involved in study groups or group projects were a valuable social asset. However, students reported that it would be very difficult to create a social network if one was not proactive and did not seek out opportunities.

> I have a group that I work with on projects and stuff in my classes. Oh, they seem okay, but ...I think I have a hard time actually coming out and, ... I know it is not like a date kind of thing, just hanging out with people, but it is like saying, "hey, do you want to go out some time?" ... I think I'm not like that. I just feel weird doing that. I'm kind of like, what if they say no? (7B, 3)

Another more outgoing student had a much easier time getting to know fellow students by taking the initiative. When asked if she had met people on-campus, she replied:

> Really well. I think I see people that I have had in classes that I don't really have a problem going up to someone and introducing myself, especially for group work and things like that. And I've carried on relationships with people from last semester even to this semester like phone numbers, e-mails, things like that. Actually, meeting people is easier than I thought it would be. Some people are kind of reserved, but most people are really involved in school. There are so many things to do here that there are lots of people doing one thing or another. So I think I've kind of gotten into things here and there, and am meeting people very well. (22A, 4)

A majority of the students commented on how friendly the campus was. This made making social connections easier for students.

> All in all, I'd say most people, most students, most staff are very

> friendly and very helpful. That helped a lot ... I mean there are an awful lot of students and faculty here, and I think that everybody basically has the same feeling that most of us want to be here. Most of us chose to be here. There's a little bit of camaraderie, kind of a kinship, that kind of thing. (12A, 4)

Remaining on-campus after class was an important way to connect, as it provides opportunities to meet other students and develop relationships. For example, students who live locally but return home each weekend find it especially hard to connect to the social environment at MSU.

> My boyfriend lives in Flint, so I always go back there on the weekends. I don't really ever hang out here. That's kind of, I told him that has to change so I can start hanging out here at least one day on the weekend, so I can meet friends and what not. (7B, 2)

The students in the study relayed that increased connection lead to increased social satisfaction. Students who had not yet connected were more dissatisfied. One student suggests to other transfer students, "Make connections with people. It's important to especially at such a huge college or university. Make connections with people in your program or your classes because the sooner you do that the more you're going to enjoy everything" (24B, 6). Satisfaction increased by second semester for most students due to familiarity, and the passing of time. This notion will be expanded upon in the Familiarity section later in this chapter.

Connecting-Physical Environment

Connecting to the physical environment includes interactions with the large campus environment and being a part of the larger campus culture and community. The physical environment not only consists of the bricks and mortar of the university but also the campus organizational structure in terms of how the campus services and departments function and are organized, campus logistics, overall campus culture, school finances, and parking. Therefore, connecting to the physical environment means feeling tied to the various cultural and structural aspects of MSU. Students connected to the physical environment by visiting and spending time on-campus before and after starting classes.

> When I was at the community college I up came up for one day for an overnight visit and stuff and kind of explored because up to that point I hadn't been here. I already knew, like chosen I was coming here but never visited the campus. I was like, "I think I should go do that." And then when I did that, that's when I just fell in love with the campus; it's such a beautiful campus. (9A, 2)

For some, a profound connection to the physical environment struck them after a bit of time at MSU. They felt a part of the MSU community, and appreciated the campus culture.

> It was a lot of getting used to, I mean. O. K. I was walking on-campus one day. This was not when I first got here, it was starting to get cold out and I was like, "I cannot believe I'm here." It is just awesome. I was walking out of the Smith Center and there were so many students. And so different from what I was used to. It was just that feeling, it was just wow, I actually made it to a university and there were all these people around me and there is so much diversity here and so much to do here that I was liking it. So I've had a very good experience since I've been here. I have heard of people like after their first few weeks of school they left because they couldn't take it. But I'm very happy with my decision to come here. (33A, 3-4)

For many, coming to MSU and connecting to the physical environment fulfilled a longtime goal. They were very pleased to be a part of things at MSU.

> I've always thought of MSU as some big school and eventually I might get there. So now it's kinda like interesting because now it's like I am actually here, actually doing what I said I was going to do for the past however many years throughout high school, and it was probably six years that I said yes I'm going to go to MSU. So it's kinda surreal like being here actually now doing it, rather than saying for so many years yes, I'm going to transfer to Michigan State. (24A, 8)

The size and structure of the campus creates a very different physical environment from the community college, which allows students to connect in new ways. Even for commuters, the presence of residence halls and the ability to get to know on-campus students created a different physical landscape for them, and unique opportunities to connect. One commuter recounts:

> There's just a lot more diversity of people, a lot more people. That's something that I really like about it is the people. There's always somebody around. Where like at CC you went to your classes and then you left because it was a commuter college. You didn't stay at all. And so there's a lot of people that know people I guess that are living here. (10B, 1)

The campus diversity in terms of ethnicity and activities was something that was salient and appreciated by the majority of the students, and added to MSU being a very different physical environment for them.

> I'm really interested in the diversity of the people. There are people from all over the world that I've seen and met. And at community colleges you kind of just get... the people from the community, maybe just from a few miles around, that's it. (22A, 5)

The physical facilities at MSU were conducive to students spending time hanging out informally on-campus, in areas such as the Student Union and International Center.

> One of the things that's different from community college life is that at MSU there is a life on-campus that is outside of classes, whereas at the community college, you would oftentimes go to class, learn your stuff, have a fifteen or twenty minute break before you go to another class, and then you walk five minutes to the parking lot and walk to your car and go home to do homework and stuff like that. So in that sense, it's different. (16A, 2-3)

In contrast to the community college, because MSU was a residential campus, thousands of students lived on-campus and spent the bulk of their time there. One-half of the students who were interviewed lived on-campus, and many connected to the overall campus through their residence hall. Residence halls sponsor many types of programming for their students, and their hall governments are another way that students can get involved.

> I am living in McDonel Hall right now. ...It's good and I like it a lot. I do a lot with the community service and that type of thing is so its kind of nice to have that extracurricular thing and still have it where you're living. (5A, 2)

Living on-campus or in an off-campus apartment with friends allowed students to get to know their neighbors and to easily engage in conversations with other students due to close proximity. Students living off-campus with relatives received support and encouragement for their educational endeavors, but no one they lived with had firsthand knowledge and day-to-day experience with the campus.

The residence halls, which are an optimal location for connection, are mandatory for freshmen, but optional for transfer students. Therefore, due to the physical structure of housing regulations, transfer students did not automatically have the physical proximity advantage that all freshmen had by living on-campus. Some commuter students in the study perceived this as a missed opportunity.

> I kind of, in a way, wished that when I was a freshman that I did come here first. That way I would have lived in the dorm and, you know, the whole experience. And now I wouldn't feel comfortable moving to a dorm just because, you know, I'm a junior and that just wouldn't work out too well, I don't think. (7B, 4)

Overall, there are a variety of ways that students connected to the academic, social, and physical environments utilizing both formal and informal structures. The table below summarizes some of the more common avenues of connecting. They also interrelate to the three different types of learning resources as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Means of connecting

Means of Connecting	Formal Structure	Informal or Initiative
Class (Academic)	Group Projects walk-in hours Getting to know instructor in class* Class discussions* *size impacts these	Forming Study Groups Striking up informal conversation* *Size impacts this
Out of Class (Social)	Student Organizations Intramurals Spectator Sporting Events Plays/concerts/speakers	Conversations on busses, in public areas Parties/Bars Students they knew prior to arriving at MSU New friends
Living On-Campus (Physical)	Hall government	Proximity conversations
Off-Campus Apartment (Physical)		Proximity conversations
Off-Campus with relatives (Physical)		Support/encouragement for school, but no formal connection with school

Familiarity

Familiarity is the third theme that emerged from the data. With familiarity, students feel more complete with their transition into certain aspects of the academic, social, and physical environments. Familiarity goes beyond learning resources that provide initial information. It is taking that information and internalizing it and making it their own. Familiarity is when a student reiterates that they really understand and feel a part of various aspects of MSU. It is moving from, "I just learned this information" to "I am familiar with what I need to do and how things work". It is a part of becoming socialized within the environment, and having a solid understanding of the norms and values within the academic, social, and physical environments of MSU. Familiarity was much more prevalent in the second interview, since it often takes time to become familiar and comfortable in circumstances. It is the end of newness and a feeling of dissonance with information. Familiarity is when students feel that they truly "know" the information. The more students are exposed to information and the environments, the more comfortable they become. In addition, prior contact with campus leads to smoother transition to MSU and fewer surprises. Therefore, students who had prior contact with campus were able to move to familiarity sooner. The overall data make clear that transition is considered a process. In some ways, familiarity is the end of that process, when level of comfort is high and students truly understand what it entails to be an MSU student.

Familiarity is something that occurs over time, through repeated exposure to information and situations, and increased levels of comfort. Students had very different experiences their first few weeks than they did during their second semester, largely due to familiarity. "I really didn't know what to expect just coming in, it was all new to me there are so much to take in when I first got here last semester it was just, wow. It was a big adjustment." (9A, 2) After the initial shock, it got a bit better for students. "The first week of being here was like God this sucks, but then I got used to it, got into a groove and it was all okay." (7A, 4) Another student concurs.

> At first I think I may have been a little bit nervous maybe or a little bit of tension about how things would go here. But that's pretty normal, and I got used to it pretty fast. I've gotten used to things more. (1A, 4)

During the second interview there is a sense that the transition is more complete for students into the MSU culture, and that students have moved towards familiarity. Students feel more comfortable, happier. The most common response to the opening question during the second interview of "how is everything going?" is "much better." When asked how second semester compared to the first, one student replied:

> I think I feel more comfortable in this atmosphere, knowing where I'm going. Scheduling my classes was a lot easier than it was the first time. I pretty much knew what to expect from the professors. I think I was more comfortable talking to my fellow students in my classes if I needed help or if I needed someone's notes. (15B, 2)

Her description portrays familiarity with the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU. Other students also exemplified familiarity with MSU during the second interview, to the point that they were very detached from their community college experience. "I've been here for almost two semesters now so I've kinda found that I'm forgetting what the community college experience was like. I just get the gist of it but I'm pretty much just used to this atmosphere here" (1B, 4). By the end of the second semester, memories of expectations and anticipation of becoming an MSU student are not as sharp. "I don't remember exactly what I had expected so I can't really compare it to now" (13B, 2). The theme of familiarity emerged due to the structure of the study that included two data collection points. Having two interviews over time allowed for comparative questions to be asked at both interviews, as well as reflective questions in the second interview.

Focus tends to shift overtime as the transition feels more complete to the students. Since they no longer have to expend as much energy in learning about MSU, they are able to spend more time and energy on simply being an MSU student. "Things have been easier in this semester. I just have a better focus on what I need to get done instead of just being so busy off being away from home." (5B, 3) Familiarity assists the transition by helping students to understand the environment. The majority of the students were not surprised because they expected that there would be differences at MSU. However, they did not always know all the specifics of those differences. They needed to find out the details in order to move towards familiarity. Therefore, they had to utilize learning resources, and connect within the environments, in order to inevitably become familiar with the various aspects of MSU. Some of these differences are illustrated below in the discussion of familiarity in terms of the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU.

Familiarity-Academic Environment

Students become familiar with an assortment of academic issues in different ways and at different rates. Familiarity can occur at a multitude of times and in a variety of ways. If the student is familiar with the many academic components for example, then their classroom experiences will benefit. The timing of when students become familiar impacts the transition. Sometimes the knowledge of how the academic system actually works only comes after the first exam with a poor grade. Other times, when students are comfortable and familiar with the perceived academic realities, they will perform well. Therefore, familiarity impacts student transition and academic success in a mixture of ways. The following section relays examples of familiarity or lack of familiarity in terms of class size, faculty involvement, course expectations, major requirements, and time to graduation.

The first few weeks varied for students, and spoke to their familiarity or lack of familiarity with the academic environment.

> [My] first couple of weeks were great. Like I said, CC actually prepared me a little better than I was expecting. I was expecting to step into class and it be like a whole new world, but really it wasn't. Other than class size, which I sat in the first couple of rows, I really didn't notice. I was lucky with my first group of professors (20A, 3-4)

This student was able to become familiar and comfortable with the academic environment at MSU fairly quickly. Other students considered the academic environment at MSU significantly different from the community college, which took some getting used to.

> I would say I'm always amazed. I'm always amazed with classes. It is so different than what's offered at a community college as far as sizes, as far as the teacher being more concerned with his research project than being concerned with teaching the class, as far as TA's, which you don't have [at a CC]. It is just a different experience at the community college. I mean it's something you adjust to, but it takes some time. I think first semester I was kind of confused at times, what's going on, you know. But right now, I have to expect it. I feel comfortable with it now, I guess. (4B, 7)

Initially, the classroom environment was awkward for this student. However, over time with increased exposure, the differences in the academic environment became more comfortable. For others, class size was a bit overwhelming and was often mentioned as the academic component with which students most needed to become comfortable and familiar.

> It's very big. It's just a lot of people. I started [classes] this semester, and you go into the rooms, and there's not even enough seats for everyone to sit down on the first day, and just coming from a small private high school, and then a small college, it's just amazing [to have] that many people in one class, learning. So that's been one of the hardest things to get used to. (1A, 3)

Another student's experience demonstrates how familiarity occurs over time. Eventually, MSU becomes what the students know, and is at the forefront of their minds. During the first interview, when asked to compare MSU academically to the community college, this student shared very specific comparisons.

> I have to say that it was nice having the smaller classes ... at the community college. ... It's harder here because a lot of the teachers are research based and that's their main focus. And to find a teacher who is just as interested in teaching as they are at the community college level is hard. And I've had a lot of teachers

> here where you could tell that here that they were just doing research and they had to teach instead of just doing teaching because they wanted to, so that was kind of the nicer thing about being at the community college. But I mean the classes here are good classes. Its the same workload but it's harder to get an A here than it was the at the community college. (5A, 2)

Conversely, during the second interview, when the same student was asked to compare MSU to the community college, she replied:

> I don't know. It's pretty much the same old, same old ... it's hard to say now because I'm so used to being here and it's been almost a year since I've been at the community college to really remember everything. ... There's pretty much not that much of the difference but it's just on a much, much larger scale here in every way. (5B, 8)

Over time familiarity became apparent for this student, and she was much more comfortable with MSU's academic environment at the time of the second interview.

The majority of the students felt welcomed by faculty, but also understood it was important to take initiative and actively seek out academic resources, such as faculty.

> I think both the atmospheres [of the CC and MSU] are both the same, except that this one is a lot larger, more people, but both, I found at both the community college and here, they are both very willing to help as long as you make the effort. They're not going to say OK and then take you by the hand and do that, but if you need the help, you can go see them and they are more than willing to help you. (9A, 4)

This student's comments show an in depth understanding of the realities of student/faculty relationships at MSU, which was mentioned by others as well. Overall, students in the study concurred that faculty are willing to help if you seek them out.

Some students discovered a more demanding academic environment at MSU, and that the nature of the class work was different. They often relayed that MSU coursework expected a deep level of critical thinking.

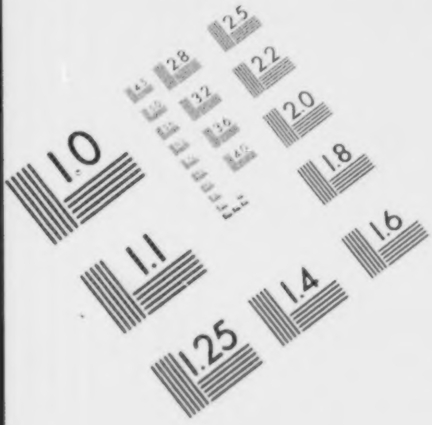
> I think they make you do a little more work here. I mean, even if they're reaction papers every week. We never had reaction papers. Most of the time we just had tests and then the paper. Here, they may have tests, and then a group project. I mean they do a lot of group projects here. We never did group projects in community college. Just more challenging, more critical thinking, rather than everything cut and dried. (5B, 8)

Over time, students learned what was necessary to achieve academic success at MSU. "I basically got into the groove for that class and each class and figured it all out, just what they wanted" (13A, 3). Many students found that it was important to keep up on course assignments. "That's what I found out last semester if you don't stay on top of the stuff it's really, really hard to try and catch up (9A, 5)." Therefore, this increased familiarity helped her to be more successful in her second semester coursework than she was in her first. At the start of the second interview, when asked how everything was going second semester, she replied:

> Much better than last semester. I have gotten myself into a little habit of studying more, which I didn't do last semester, I didn't really care to barely study and you've got to study. You've got to study, you've got to keep up on top of [everything]. If you do a little a day it is a lot easier than trying to cram at the end, so which I realize that. (9B, 1)

Due to familiarity she was able to put a plan into action for second semester, and reported that her grades were significantly higher. Many students partially attributed the increased difficulty to taking upper level courses their junior year. Therefore, they expected more difficult courses, yet did not know exactly what they would be like.

> There is more work involved I would say, but other than that, just because the classes are getting harder than the freshman classes you study like an hour a week, the junior level classes are study like three or four hours a week type of thing. It takes more time, but that's understandable. (7A, 6)


1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5

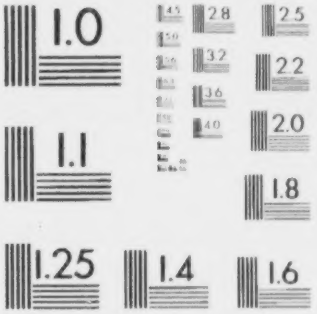
AIIM

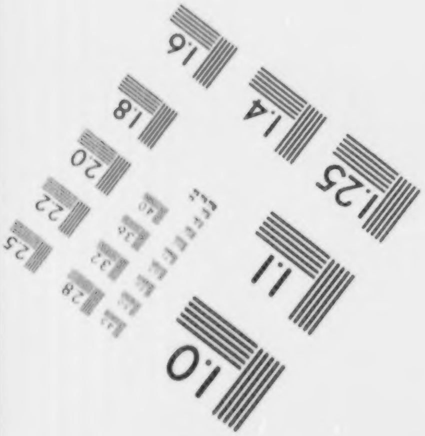
Association for Information and Image Management

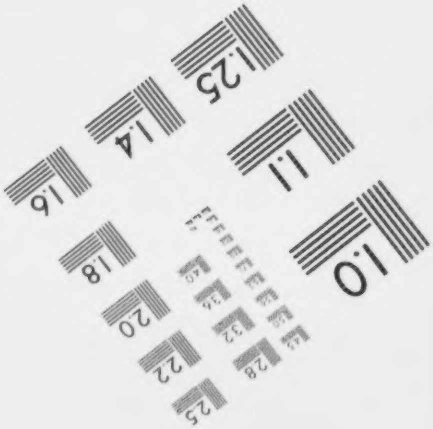
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301/587-8202

1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5

Centimeter
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
mm
1
2
3
4
5
Inches


1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5
5.0
5.6
6.3
7.1


1.6
1.4
1.8
1.25
2.0
2.2
1.1
2.5
1.0
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5


1.25
1.4
1.1
1.6
1.0
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5

MANUFACTURED TO AIIM STANDARDS
BY APPLIED IMAGE, INC.

Many students reported a posited difference between performance in first semester coursework compared to second semester, as recounted by this student:

> Much better. I'm not struggling in my classes like I was. I knew what to expect when I got back from break. It's much better. I'm actually looking at getting, I had a 2.1 last semester but I'm probably looking at a 3.25 or 3.5 this semester...I basically knew that when I went to my lectures they were going to give me the gist of stuff. They weren't going to go into detail like they did at CC. So I knew that before I went to class I should probably read this chapter that I knew they were going to go over so that way if I had any questions I would probably get it clarified through lecture instead of waiting to go to lecture and then read the chapter and then still have questions and not be able to ask them. So I decided to start reading the chapter before I went to class. It makes a big difference and makes things a lot easier. ... And I knew more of what to expect. I kinda figured it out last semester that it's all a lot of self-learning instead of being taught. (30B, 1)

She relays a more thorough understanding of many aspects of the academic environment, and the important components to be successful in the classroom including how to approach coursework. Very few students had quite as dramatic a change in grades, but all reported some type of shift in familiarity of the academic environment throughout their time at MSU.

One situation that impacted several students in the study was time to graduation. Many needed to extend their stay at MSU or take several summer courses in order to graduate "on time". This speaks to their initial familiarity with MSU's academic requirements and their knowledge of specific requirements prior to attending MSU. For many, the coursework did not align as well as hoped, or a major change impacted how their credits were counted.

> [My biggest challenge is] trying to get everything scheduled because I transferred, like some of my basic things I am playing catch-up. So I'm in a class that's all transfer students that are playing catch-up. So I just really am taking all my required classes. I have no free time to take any fun classes, is just everything catching up. That's another reason I had to go in the

> summer, because for human ecology you have to do so many sequenced classes and I wouldn't be able to get them all done because you can't take them together. (3B, 1)

In some cases, specialized programs were a factor in lengthening time to degree completion. In some majors, the bulk of courses cannot be found at a community college. Lack of familiarity with how specialized major requirements played out at the community college and MSU lead to this student to need an extra year of schooling.

> The universities and the community colleges should talk to each other, like about different degrees, and transferability, because I found out just a week ago that I'm going to have to be here two more years instead of one more year, and that's really going to hurt me financially. Because my major requires a lot of classes that aren't offered at CC, I ended up having to stay longer than I thought I was. It would be neat to find out for what majors you could really go to CC and not have to stay in college for five years. (6B, 3)

Lack of information also impacts plans for graduate and professional school. Another student found he needed to change his timeline for applying to medical school, because he did not fully understand all that the application process entailed.

> I'm behind because everyone here had a two-year start on me for planning for that. So that's a disadvantage and I've had to, I am postponing med school for a year just so I can build up and be equal to all the other people my age applying. (1B, 2)

Familiarity with major programs in general proved to be important to students as they transitioned to MSU. Type of major (limited enrollment versus open enrollment) did not appear to impact the transition in different ways. The one exception is one student in the study who was not adequately aware of the separate admissions process into the limited enrollment major she desired, and was thus dissatisfied when she was denied admission into the major. Therefore, her lack of familiarity with the academic admissions process impacted her transition.

Overall, familiarity or lack of familiarity with the academic environment impacted the transfer students' experiences at MSU.

Familiarity-Social Environment

Familiarity with the social environment relates to feeling comfortable with social circumstances, and being firmly established socially. This is often the end result of social connecting, when the connections are solidly in place, and students feel well established. For some students, knowing native MSU students gave them prior knowledge of the social environment at MSU, and assisted with their overall adjustment. "I already have a couple of friends that go to school here already so it wouldn't be too hard on me trying to get adjusted to a bigger college" (34A, 2). Therefore, the student was able to move to social familiarity sooner because of the friends she knew ahead of time. Those that did not have prior campus contacts wished that they did. When a student was asked what she wished she would have known prior to arriving at MSU, she replied: "In general, probably knowing more people, 'cause that was the biggest thing, not knowing that many people coming into a new surrounding in general" (9B, 8). Second semester, students feel a lot more established socially. This was often attributed to the passing of time, which increased their level of comfort.

> Now that I've been here for a semester I feel a lot more comfortable doing things and I know some people on the polo team and stuff like that. I've made a couple friends and you know it seems better I guess. But that comes with time. I'm sure that part does. (7A, 5)

Students became more interactive with the social environment over time. One student spoke for many when he reiterated the importance of taking initiative in order to become socially established at MSU, and thus move to social familiarity.

> The longer I'm here the more people I'm meeting and the more acquaintances that I see, so it's nice and it just takes time. I knew it would, but people are open here and they're outgoing people so it's pretty easy. And there are more extracurricular things to do here than there are at a community college. I've noticed that. But I didn't really at first until I actually started participating more, so that's kind of neat. (1B, 1)

Almost all of the students also reported feeling more a part of the social scene during the second interview. Like others, this student notes an increased level of comfort with the social environment during her second semester at MSU.

> For last semester I think I have more friends now and I know more people, because when I first come here I don't know anyone. Now I feel more comfortable. So I think that's made the difference with second semester. I feel more comfortable with them, like a part of them. I'm more adjusted. So I feel more comfortable with second semester. (28B, 1)

Therefore, familiarity with the social environment was comforting and enhanced the overall experience of MSU for the students.

Familiarity-Physical Environment

Familiarity with the physical environment relates to level of comfort with the overall campus structure and culture. Familiarity was shown when students articulated feeling a part of the campus community, and felt that part of their transition to MSU was complete. Initially, the size of the campus environment was overwhelming for many students.

> I think the most vivid thing I remember is getting oriented on-campus, just trying to find my way around. I wasn't able to go on the bus tour around campus, so it took me awhile to find which roads, what they were named, and where they went, and where they became one way. I think that largeness was the first thing that struck me, and I can still remember it, how large it seemed. (16A, 3)

For many, the perception of the size of campus shifted over time. This speaks to increased exposure and time spent in the campus environment. Knowing more people also impacted perceptions. The more familiar faces students saw around campus, the more comfortable they were with the environment.

> It's still a big school, except that it does feel like it's gotten smaller. I see people everywhere I go now, so it doesn't feel like it's all that big. (6A, 6)

Others were still impacted by the large size campus during the second semester, but most at least felt settled in to the main parts of campus that they utilized regularly. Despite some of its restrictions, campus size was seen as a benefit in terms of the wealth of opportunities it provided both in and out of the classroom.

> At MSU you get a different feel for things. There are a lot more opportunities in the university setting and being on-campus, which is just because MSU is 20 times bigger than CC. (24B, 6)

Familiarity and comfort with the physical environment settles in more so second semester. During the second interview, many students reported having a better idea of campus logistics.

> I feel a lot better now about everything. I'm a lot more confident about parking and stuff. I know which lots are which and I know a lot more little tricks, which makes that a lot easier because I'm not as fearful about things as I was last semester and I know more that kind of little stuff that you learn as you go along. So I'm glad about that. I have a better sense of the system and better sense of belonging here and stuff than I did last semester. (24B, 5)

Commuters especially noted settling into a routine in terms of their commute to campus. One student mentioned in the first interview that being a commuter and just trying to find her way around campus was a struggle. When asked how that was going during the second interview, she replied:

> Pretty well. I don't notice that anymore. I come here when I have to, and I can come, like we have group work, like I came over here on a Sunday once. So I don't really notice it being a problem. I think too because I am a junior and so I think that most people

> have apartments or whatever so they're driving here too. I see that as less of a problem now than last semester. I don't know if I'm just getting used to it, or just accepting the fact that that's what I do. And I actually met someone in my classes too ... she's from a different town but she lives in [my home town] and she commutes here too. So that's been kinda neat to talk to her about it. I don't know if anything has changed or if it's just me dealing with how it is. (17B, 4)

The physical environment of MSU becomes what students know, and what is at the forefront of their minds. As one student reflected, "I've been here for almost two semesters now so I've kinda found that I'm forgetting what the community college experience was like. I just get the gist of it but I'm pretty much just used to this atmosphere here (1B, 4)."

Over time, students see advantages to some of the components of the physical environment, including newfound freedom within the campus culture.

> I'm not homesick anymore because I went home for winter break and absolutely hated it, just because you come here and you've got all the freedom and the responsibility of being on your own. And then you go back home and they take that all away from you, so it was I like, I didn't like that. So I'm not homesick anymore and this semester is going to go good, and I like my classes. (9A, 3)

In summary, one student's experience demonstrates the experiences of many as they transitioned from lost to familiar with myriad aspects of the campus environment. When she shared how second semester was:

> Probably better. Last semester, everything was really new. I was lost and now I don't get lost now. I know where everything is on the campus now. I didn't think I'd ever know where everything was, but it is really not that difficult. It is easier to walk than it is to drive, though. ... I have my own little, I don't know how to say it, a little system of how I do everything now. I'm more easily relaxed and not as tough on me getting frustrated because I don't know where classes are and you know I was supposed to get this, where, where is that store and stuff like that. I've lived here now, so I know where even like going downtown and stuff, I know where things are and I even have my own favorite coffee place now. (19B, 2)

Throughout her experiences, she transformed the campus into something that was her own, that she felt a part of, including her own hangout. Once students got settled into a routine, they felt a stronger sense of belonging. Overall, familiarity with the physical environment of MSU's campus was pivotal to the "completion" of the community college transfer students' transition to MSU.

Negotiating

The fourth theme found in the study was Negotiating. Negotiating is defined as the ways in which students change their behavior and surroundings in order to be more successful within the academic, social, and physical environments of MSU. Negotiating can be an individual process in which students change their own behavior. It can also be a process interrelated with the larger campus context through the ways the students actively change their surroundings and circumstances. It is an active process, as opposed to Familiarity, which is more about understanding and internalizing information.

Negotiating-Academic Environment

Negotiating the academic environment was vital to success with coursework. Students negotiated by changing their approach to coursework or by changing their academic circumstances, such as the classes they took and the major they selected. Academic success was related to negotiating as well as familiarity, because the more information students had about the academic structure, the more successful they were in navigating the system and being actively involved in their academic experience. The students in the study found that they needed to know information about how courses were structured as well as academic expectations of faculty, and then adjust accordingly. Students changed their academic behavior in a variety of ways. In addition, students took into account their own learning styles and changed the academic environment around them to be more conducive to their style and thus their academic success. Several examples are explained below.

How students negotiated the large classroom environment varied for students. Some modified where they sat in the classroom in order to change their perceived chances of success. "All the classes, I always sit in the front because I know I'll do better there" (3B, 2). Over one-half of the students mentioned that sitting in front and paying close attention in class was beneficial. Also, it was important to utilize recitations as opportunities for in class conversations, since it is often not possible to ask questions in class. Another student reiterates the importance of adjustment in large classes as well.

> You can't get a lot out of it with five hundred people in the class. It doesn't make for great conversation topic. I know that's why they break it up into smaller sections. I don't think the large classes have really hurt my grades or anything. I just have to adjust differently, and listen more attentively. You know, not being able to ask as many questions, just listening more, and sitting at the front of the classroom in the center. (6A, 6)

Being flexible is important to the overall transition process. Some found that it was important to seek out assistance with the academic demands.

> When I have a problem in class, I got a tutor and it was just... I never used tutors at my other school but now I feel like, I don't care, I need help. And I'll admit that I don't understand what is going on and need someone's help. (33A, 8)

Therefore, after assessing a need, the student changed their behavior and negotiated the academic environment by seeking out tutoring, which is a formal learning resource.

Almost all the students changed their study habits from those used during their time at the community college, including a noteworthy increase in studying and reading time, as well as sharpened time management skills. "I do a lot more reading here and a lot more studying and have to write out all my assignments for the week a lot more and just be a little more organized, I think" (15A, 7).

The balance of work and academics was an ongoing process of negotiation for many students. Some changes occurred for students upon arrival at MSU.

> Basically what I did at CC compared to MSU, actually at CC I worked at the same time as going to school. Here, I actually barely work now so I get more time for school, but I take bigger loads here, too. It's been right about the same amount of work. (1A, 4)

Other changes did not occur until later, such as after the first test, or even after the first semester grades arrived. Therefore, the events that served as trigger points for change in the form of negotiating occurred at different times for different students. When the change occurred impacted the student's transition as well as academic success. For example, one student reported having academic difficulty during the first semester. When asked if he realized this before the first test, he replied:

> No, not at all, it was a wake-up call. That's why it was so disappointing. I didn't miss a class all semester, I went to every class and I took notes. I had just pages and pages of notes and I took the test and I got it back and I was just devastated. It would have been something if I would have missed or just went three times but I went to all the discussion groups and what not and I just couldn't believe that I did so poorly. So working with the TA kind of made me focus, like yeah, you have all the notes but this is how you need to apply them, something a little bit different. I was more used to just taking notes and then the teacher would ask you basically what you just took notes on the test, which is writing down what you memorized basically. This was more applying and analyzing and a little more critical thinking involved. (14A, 7)

So, working with the TA greatly assisted him with his subsequent success in the coursework. He negotiated the environment by seeking out his TA, a formal learning resource, after he realized he needed additional help in class in order to be successful.

One student found that he needed to change his work and living situation in order to succeed academically.

> It demands a lot more time. I worked full time and went to school full time when I was at CC. Came to MSU and find out that your study time is greatly increased. It is probably due to my program. Nursing is a professional program, so we are expected to be at school about 60 hours a week, whether it is class time or independent study time. So, I had to cut back on my hours a lot, had to move back home, which was a big bombshell, so it took a lot of adjusting. (20A, 4)

Several other students were living at home for financial reasons, as well. Another student also changed her study approach over time in order to be successful academically and also work.

> I started working this semester and I think at first I was like really thinking it wasn't working out too well. I got my first tests back and they were not good. But, then I studied more and I guess it was kind of just getting to figure out what the professors wanted and what you needed to know for the classes. Right now I think I'm okay. (7B, 1)

Time management was a key strategy that impacted virtually all the students' transition to the academic environment at MSU. Students found ways of balancing their time to do well in classes throughout their time here. One student reported shifting her time management and study skills. At the beginning of the second semester, when asked if she had done this shift throughout first semester, she replied:

> [A change in time management and study habits has] been more this semester. I have been making sure that I'm ahead on my work, just the same skills that I used at the community college. I went from like a three-point something to like what I'm at now so

> it's a big adjustment. I make sure I go to the library a lot now and I make time for the library whether I have to go when I get out of work or whatever. (34A, 5)

It was confirmed during the second interview that she followed through with this plan.

> My study habits are picking up more. I've learned to apply myself more, like make myself go to the library. Before I didn't go to the library as much but now I am going to library more. You know, it's just a different environment for a study habit or something like that...It's getting better. That's all a part of the library experience and just making yourself have time, allow time to study. Allow time to continue to review your materials from class. That's the only way because if you cram it at the end, which everyone is going to continue to learn until they say I can't keep cramming. So it's just a good experience to go to the library to sit somewhere quietly, you just have to do that. Whatever it takes for you to be able to focus on your homework and study and whatever it takes. (34B, 1-2)

Another student's experience illustrates both the themes of familiarity and negotiating. Once he was more familiar with MSU, he was able to take action and negotiate his time management in order to be academically successful. At the beginning of second semester, he mentioned that he felt comfortable at MSU. Based on this and other responses throughout the interview, he was given the prompt, "it sounds like you didn't necessarily feel that way when you got here?" To this, he replied:

> No, not at all. I thought I was getting my butt kicked all over the place every time and I totally did not think I was supposed to be here when I first got here because everybody else seemed to be knowing where everything was at as far as buildings and where to buy books. And at the community college it was this big and you could walk across campus in five minutes and I knew where everything was at. So I definitely felt like an outsider coming up here because I didn't know where everything was at and I wasn't doing very academically well.

When asked what he thought helped to change his situation, he responded:

> Just to buckle down I guess, and just to know that if you work your hardest and that you will get a lot out of it as long as you

> work hard. I think I just thought it was better to stop worrying about little stuff and stop looking two months in advance, and start looking at what do I have to do today, what do I have to do tomorrow, what do I have to do this week. I think I was getting overwhelmed looking ahead. I'm like I have two papers due and a test and I was like how am I going to fit this and so I think you just have to look at everything one day at a time and that helps. (14A, 8)

As opposed to changing their own behavior, some students found solutions to situations by changing their academic setting. One student recounts, "I changed my major. [I was in] Social work, but I couldn't get through anatomy" (25A, 1). She found that if she switched to the community relations major, she could avoid anatomy, but still pursue a Master's in Social Work after graduation. Another student also found a way to change his academic surroundings to be more to his liking.

> Just the other day after I left [organic chemistry] lab, I touched my eye and it swelled up. So I'm reconsidering taking any more labs just because of health risks later in life. ... I switched from the biochemistry major. I didn't want to put myself [at risk], take any more labs. Even though labs are easy, I didn't really want to do it. So I switched to physiology, which is basically along the exact same lines, just no labs. (1B, 1)

Another student also changed her major to have more interesting biology courses instead of additional chemistry courses, which were not as appealing to her. She recounts that she knew if she were interested in the courses, she would get better grades. "In order to help my GPA, I changed [my major] from biochemistry to human biology" (30B, 7). Therefore, students uniquely shaped their academic environment to best suit their personal goals and styles.

Overall, students negotiate MSU by changing their behavior as well as surroundings in order to create the unique academic environment that will help to facilitate their educational success at MSU.

Negotiating-Social Environment

Students negotiated a variety of aspects on-campus to be more socially involved, including formal and informal structures. Negotiating the social environment included the changes that students made along the way in order to meet fellow students and get involved in social activities. Being active in campus activities was an important part of social negotiation and facilitated friendships with other students. For some, the new social environment was a challenge in that they needed to change their behavior and be outgoing to meet more people. Students who did not make an effort to meet people were often disappointed with their social situation. Initiative was a vital social negotiating tool.

> I think what I did was pretty good. Just to jump in to a bunch of different things, then as you decide what you want to do, kind of weed the other ones out. That was a good plan, because I know, I have a lot of friends who just transferred here, too, ones living in my hall, that really didn't get involved in anything, and they don't really do anything. They just sit in their room and play computer games all day, and don't know anybody. They complain about not knowing anybody, but they haven't gone out and met anybody, either. (6B, 8)

Socially, commuter students living at home in the study found it more difficult to meet people unless they took initiative.

> I guess one disadvantage of living off-campus is not getting to meet that many people than if I lived on-campus in the dorm or something, so that's probably one negative side to living off-campus... My social life isn't exactly where I want it to be, but that is understandable considering I don't live here right in the area and don't get to meet everybody. Not that you can meet everybody anyway but meet a lot of people, socialize and all that. I don't take the time, so it's my own fault. (7A, 4)

This student's situation stems both from the fact she lived off-campus, and also from her motivation. Throughout the interviews, it appeared that it was especially important for off-campus students to take initiative to get involved and to meet other students.

There were also more informal ways that students were involved socially on-campus, such as by talking to classmates and neighbors, or interacting with students at informal social gatherings. A common trend was the need to be outgoing in order to meet people. One student noted the following during the second interview:

> Socially, things are going pretty well. I made a lot of friends in my classes. I pretty much stopped waiting for people to come up to me and I started opening up a little bit more. I was kind of, I don't know, of afraid to do that before. I don't know why, I just was. But I started opening up more and that has increased my circle of friends more. When I walk back to class now I actually see people that I know and I say hi to them. It's a nice feeling to know that pretty much everywhere I go I know somebody. And it's just because I've opened up more instead of being more closed off. And with the classes being so big, you don't have the intimate circles like I did at CC. So just whoever you sit next to just say, "Did you get that? Hi, how are you doing?" Just opening more has greatly increased my circle of friends. And I actually go out now; I don't spend all of my time in the dorm. (30B, 1)

Informal classroom conversations were especially important for one student who commuted and had a very difficult time meeting people initially. The classroom can be an important place for students' social transition. During the second interview, when asked what has impacted her the most throughout her time at MSU, she reported:

> Probably class sizes I would say. Learning how to cope when there are 200 people in your class instead of 20. That's probably been the hardest part, the biggest difference. I've learned to sit in the same spot in class every day because then you meet the people around you, instead of sitting by strangers all the time like I did last semester. (10B, 2)

By sitting in the same seat, she was negotiating the academic environment, but more prevalent was the impact to her social situation, since it allowed her to meet people and develop relationships with fellow students. As other students pointed out as well, sitting in the same spot in a large class helped to give it a small class feel. This also shows the creativity of transfer students; something as simple as sitting in the same seat has made all the difference for her.

Students' living arrangements provided a variety of opportunities to interact with the social environment, which varied depending on their individual living situation: on-campus, off-campus apartment, or commuting from home. For some, changing the living situation assisted with their social interactions.

> I haven't made as many friends here yet but I think I will now, because I just switched dorms at the beginning of the semester. Before I was in McDonel, which has a lot of international students, and it was really hard relating to them, especially because a lot of them didn't speak English very well. But now I moved to Akers, and there are a lot of people that are in the ag education and in ag communication, which is what I am doing, so I know a lot more of the people, so that helps. I mean, we hang out a lot more, I know a lot more people. It's really fun, I'm really glad I switched dorms. (24A, 3)

For others, largely those living on-campus, the social environment was initially so enticing that it distracted from academics. Therefore, they needed to negotiate by being less socially active in order to do well in classes.

> I have to say I've definitely cut back socially. I kind of got that out of my system first semester. I still go out like on the weekends but I've cut down pretty much to only weekends... I have a horse now that I take care of so I do that instead on weeknights. And all my friends' schedules changed so were kind of in and out at different times, so we're not all there at the same time, which makes things easier as far as staying focused on school. So it's much better all the way around. It was definitely an adjustment. (5B, 1)

Overall, students negotiated the social environment both in and out of the classroom, and utilized formal and informal structures to meet people. Students were, in general, more satisfied the more they were connected socially to others at MSU. Negotiating was a key tool for facilitating social interaction, and thus overall satisfaction.

Negotiating-Physical Environment

Students felt that MSU's physical environment was quite different than that of the community colleges students attended. As one student suggested, "Obviously campus size is a big difference. It takes a long time to get between two places" (29A, 4). Therefore, negotiating the physical environment of the campus and dealing with campus logistics was a salient experience for many of the students. Several reiterated the importance of understanding how to get around campus. "Just watch where you cross the street and make sure you look both ways at least ten times before you jump out" (30A, 7). The physical environment also includes parking as well as in general, students' physical living space. In terms of negotiating the social environment, living arrangements were mentioned in terms of how they relate to students' social situations. Here, they are included in a more general way referring to housing as a facility. In addition, finances and tuition are considered part of the physical environment.

Parking is an ongoing challenge for many transfer students. Although not directly asked about it, almost every student mentioned issues surrounding parking. One student captured many students' perception of the parking system overall, stating, "The parking police was kind of a shock when I got here, that they would be so crazy with the parking tickets. I thought they'd be a little bit more laid-back about that, but I guess not" (23B, 2). The student found he needed to be more cautious about when and where he parked in order to avoid tickets. Considering the structure and regulations surrounding parking, many had to make similar changes. "I'm dissatisfied with parking too. I don't like that, especially now that they tore down that parking structure. Now we're really screwed. There is no place to park. But I just take the commuter bus now." (7B, 9)

The following student's experience speaks to both familiarity and negotiating. Once she was more familiar with the transportation issues on-campus, she was able to negotiate her behavior accordingly.

> The one thing that stands out is that people on bicycles like to run you over, if you don't have a place to go. The other thing that stands out is that, in the very beginning, I didn't know about the commuter lot either. In the very beginning, I was parking all the way, like, on Orchard Street where there's free parking. You just park on the side of the street or whatever. It doesn't have a time limit or anything. I was trucking it twenty minutes into class, which I didn't like, because by the time I got to class, I was all sweaty and hot and everything, you know? ... Now I park in the commuter lot. I pay the forty dollars to get the pass to park in the commuter lot, and I pay the twenty-five cents to take the bus in. Then I walk around campus, and take the bus back to the commuter lot. (18A, 15)

She used an informal learning resource, her mother, to find out about the commuter lot. Her mother called for her to find out all the details on parking and the bus system.

The physical surroundings also impact the academic life, especially new living arrangements away from home. One student found that she needed to change due to living with friends in an apartment, as opposed to living with her parents.

> I realized it throughout the semester, but just like I said, I wasn't applying myself. I wasn't making myself [get up for class and study]. You know, when you [are] in college especially when you have an apartment, dorm whatever, you are your own person. Your teachers are not going to call you and tell you to get up. Your parents are not going to say for you to get up. You have to do that on your own. And that's really a discipline within yourself basically. It's just something that you have to make yourself do.

(34A, 4)

Some students wanted to change their living arrangements to be more conducive to their overall success.

> When you're living in the room with someone else, that's like you never have privacy, and so I'm going to get a single next year. I like having a roommate, but sometimes I just need my own time to myself. (33A, 7)

As noted in discussions of learning resources and connecting, roommate relationships have a great impact on students' overall transition. This was so profound for one student that changing roommates made the difference between wanting to leave and wanting to remain a student at MSU.

> Especially about roommate thing, that was one of the biggest problems. That was the start of it, not having a roommate that I got along with, and then being homesick put on top of that, and then just one thing after another, not liking the classes, it was just all downhill. There was one point when I was talking with my mom and just like, " don't want to be here, I want to go home, get me out of here." And then, things got better for a little bit. But since I switched rooms, everything has been good since. So that makes a big difference. (9A, 3)

The financial constraints of attending MSU lead several students to significantly shift their focus to living on a strict budget as a form of negotiating the physical environment.

> [At MSU I have] a lot of focus on work and trying to pay off bills. I had bills at home but I made a whole lot more money working because I didn't have the extra $5000 a year that I have to pay for board and food and all that other stuff, it was just school, which was also cheaper. So, it definitely taught me how to live a long time off of not much. (5B, 3)

Overall, negotiating the physical environment proved to be a vital component for successful transition for the community college transfer students.

Integrating

For some students, a deeper theme of integrating emerged, which encompasses a shift in perception that relates back to the student's identity. Data within the theme of integrating are very reflective of Tinto's (1987) theory of freshmen integration. While Tinto's theory encapsulates the academic and social campus environments, the data in this study also also portrayed a third, the physical environment. Within this study, integrating occurred after students had a deep understanding or familiarity with the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU due to interactions over time. Familiarity is about students having a full grasp of information about the academic, social, and physical environments and being comfortable with the information and making it their own. Integrating takes this a step further. For some students, by being familiar with the information, they are able to move and reflect on changes in themselves as a result of being a student at MSU. For many, their time at MSU was an opportunity to reflect and refine their future goals. After the initial settling in, they have more time to contemplate larger issues and reflect. Or, integrating may be due to the actual act of transition, of learning about MSU and being comfortable with the environment. It is the relation between the students and MSU that creates an opportunity for this shift in perception or identity to occur. Examples of integrating found in this study included new perceptions of the classroom environment and what it means to be a student, new perceptions as a result of exposure to diversity, and identity shifts in terms of "becoming" a Spartan. Once students are comfortable with the environment, they are able to be open to potential opportunities for integrating.

I think last semester I didn't really understand, I mean, I didn't

> have an outlook for my future, and I think this semester it just kind of set into more of a reality. I've learned more about my situation, and thought more about future goals, so that's a difference. (6B, 7)

Before integrating can occur, students need to be familiar with the academic, social, and physical environments of MSU. Once they have the basics down, they are able to reflect at a deeper level. One student explained:

> I think that last semester I had to learn to adjust, so this semester I know where more things are as far as buildings, and places to go to get help, or just to where you can find your stuff at. It was just like an adjusting thing last semester. And now it's starting to, I'm putting the adjusting to action. Even though it's not completely complete as far as knowing where everything is. I'm just like almost completed as far as adjusting completely to the whole college experience here. (34B, 1)

Throughout the second interview, this student recounts how she is putting the "adjusting to action" by becoming self-motivated, living on her own, and changing her study habits. Since it includes a newfound insight and shift in perception, it can be considered an example of integrating.

> I learned to accept others for who they are, but at the same time keep your identity. I met a lot of people this semester actually, through different groups that I have decided to join and in classes and stuff like that. I learned to apply myself more in class. I learned to just ask the person next to me a question, and if they were studying. Because it is better to study with someone in your class, you know if you are on the same level or if they have a higher level of you in the classroom. (34B, 1)

She "becomes" a different type of student. She also discussed a shift in viewpoint towards other people, which can be considered an example of integrating. When asked for more detail about her comment on accepting others, she elaborated:

> For instance, I see a more diverse set of students down here. I met a female who, she was like different but it didn't change the way her personality was, it didn't change the way she acted towards me or anything. For instance, she had really short hair and it was an ethnical type thing for her, and she was an African-American

> girl but I had never really seen anything like that at the community college. Everyone here has their own identity and own culture. Just because they do, don't mean you shouldn't get to know them because what they know maybe can help you out in the future. I learned that she's a really nice person and just because she's different don't mean anything at all because she's going to treat people the same as if she had regular clothes on or whatever. I liked that. It's really diverse down here. (34B, 1-2)

Of note is that the interviewee was African American as well. This interaction helped to expand her perspective that there is great diversity and individual identity within and among groups. Her ability to expand her perception of others and keep her own identity intact shows an overall change in her during her time at MSU. It was through her experiences at MSU that this was able to occur, yet it was not until after her initial adjustment to the university that this was possible for her. Arriving at MSU, the first priority was to learn the basics of the academic, social, and physical environments and to move to familiarity. When this was accomplished, she, and others that were interviewed, had the time and energy to move on to higher forms of reflection and growth. Once students are familiar with MSU, the day-to-day components of being a student take up less time and energy, which leaves them open to reflect and grow.

Some of the transfer students reported that the overall experience at MSU has been a life-changing event. One student summarizes:

> It has just been rewarding, it has been a struggle, but a good kind of struggle. I'm learning a lot about growing up in the sense of careerwise. Learning things I want to do, learning new things about nursing that I didn't know existed. Had great interactions with not only people I know, but just strangers on-campus as far as saying hello. (20B, 6)

For some, the environment at MSU assisted with development as a person. One student demonstrated many growth aspects from her experiences at MSU, which she attributes to being a part of the campus community. When asked about her overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with her experiences at MSU, one student replied:

> I am satisfied. I really enjoy it. Like I said it's harder here because of the different strains other than academic, as far as financial and that type of thing. It would be easier to stay at home but I think that the experience that I'm getting here as far as learning how to be more humble in my spending and that type of thing is really something that is going to help me in the end, and as far as keeping better track of things like that. So I definitely think that coming to the University, you learn to be more responsible with what you do, and just more careful. Like I was thinking about it last night. It was nice out and I wanted to go for a walk but then you realize that you can't always do that. And the campus, I never feel unsafe on-campus, but living in a suburban area you don't have to think about it. There's not as many people there and I think that makes the big difference too. So I think that I would definitely be satisfied with getting a different perspective of things and realizing in how many areas I was sheltered before. I never even realized that I was. That you can't really realize it until you go someplace else. (5B, 6)

There tends to be a stronger sense of community membership at the time of the second interview, as well as a shift in identity for some. One student identified herself by noting, "I am a Spartan".

> I feel like I am more a part of a community and I feel like, I don't know, I can identify myself better. At CC I was kind of like where am I going, what am I doing, I'm not really sure. I haven't been accepted. I was just existing. Here I feel like I am a Spartan, I am in the College of Ed, I am a child development major. I feel like I can identify myself and I know more about myself and the direction I am headed. I know for sure because I'm taking the classes and I'm doing the time. I'm on my way. So overall I feel like I am more happy and more satisfied here. I got good grades there and I was glad for my academic performance but here I feel like closer to my mission, closer to the end here. So I'm more satisfied overall. (3B, 9)

Change in perception occurred over time for some students. One student felt so overwhelmed by her new situation, especially concerning roommate conflicts and homesickness that she almost decided to leave. Her initial experiences provide a context for the shift in perception that occurred later for her.

> There was a lot of personality conflicts the first two months I was in school, a lot of them, and that added to how hard it was to be away. I know at least once I had my bags packed and was ready to go. I didn't know what else to do. (30A, 3)

She also had firm plans to go home for the summer. This is in sharp contrast to the experiences she reports during the second interview, including having a new roommate.

> I'm definitely happier this semester than last semester. I've gotten over my homesickness and kinda just dealt with the fact that I'm not going to have my family around me all the time and I'm not going to have my boyfriend there when I get home. It's probably made things a lot easier, because I don't have to worry about them coming home and interrupting. It's kind of made things a lot easier not to have them around me all the time. It's made me a lot more independent and a lot less, I can't think of the word. But I'm definitely more independent. I don't really rely on them for much of anything anymore. And I like that, that feeling of independence a lot. So I'll probably end up staying up here next summer, so I can get two jobs and make lots of money to pay off the debt I've accumulated this year. Next summer I'll probably just stay up here because it will be easier. (30B, 2)

Her experiences at MSU changed her and fostered a sense of independence that she did not possess prior to her time at MSU. This shift can be considered an example of integrating.

The diversity of the campus impacted many students, as it was their first exposure to a variety of cultures. It is interesting to note that although the literature often touts the strong diversity found at community colleges (Griffith & Conner, 1994; Laanan, 1998), the vast majority of the students in this study attended community colleges that had predominately white student populations. Campus diversity created an opportunity for students to rethink some of their previous experiences, to grow as a result of increased exposure at MSU, and to further reflect on their own beliefs. Some students chose to do this and thus experienced integrating, while others did not. The following student utilized campus diversity as an opportunity for personal growth.

> I think just being up here is a different cultural environment, much more culturally diverse from where I come from. And so having to deal with those issues, and I guess my CEP [diverse learners] class has opened me up too. But that's been the biggest thing that I've noticed because where I come from it's basically all white, and when I went to the community college it was all white too. So having to deal with that diversity. It's been fine. I'm more aware of how to deal with that in the classroom and stuff. I think a lot of that comes from my CEP class too. (21B, 2)

Another student had a similar experience through her interactions with her roommate's family and others in her residence. The diversity and exposure to a variety of viewpoints helped her to broaden her perspective on life.

> So I think that the biggest thing that has changed me is my experience and the way I view life and stuff now, the way I view things. It's opened my eyes a lot more to seeing what really goes on out there in the real world because I had been to all these places, I've dealt with different people of different ages. But coming here I see this is a country style, not in the country but a lot of people here are agricultural majors and stuff that's nothing that I've ever been exposed to before in my life. Not having to deal with different people, like 40 different people are my floor. This is an experience I would want my kids to have because it's a really good experience to have. It's just learning new things about different areas of life that I really didn't know about. I guess my roommate is from a dairy farm. I have been out to her farm and I talk to her parents and I see how that life is. ... Just from being from the city and you don't see that kind of thing, so just different people and different attitudes. Freshman here are like showing me, a 21-year-old, how to wear makeup and stuff. I don't wear makeup, I don't even deal with that. I just realized that when you live in the dorm you are closer to people than you realize and you actually see a lot into their lives than you would normally see into their lives if you were at home. I just sit back and look and I was like there is so much that these people have dealt with that I have never dealt with. There's also a lot of things that they've dealt with that I would never want to deal with in my life either. I'm not religious or anything and how like these are my views or anything. I have my own standards and different things that I see ... I judge people by what I see about them, but then I get to know them better. Like one of the basketball players I thought he was really arrogant until I got to know him and he's really nice. But it was an eye opener to me, getting to know the different things in life that you would never know about. (33B, 3-4)

Living on-campus facilitated the development of deep relationships with a variety of people and exposure to different experiences, which greatly impacted her overall viewpoints.

Overall, the theme of integrating showed the richness of experiences and growth that occurred for many, but not all, of the transfer students throughout their first year at MSU. Many considered the stories above, which appear to be examples of integrating, as the culminating experiences within their overall transition to their new environment.

Advice For Future Transfers

The students in the study had a great deal to say when asked to offer advice for future transfer students. The following are some of the recommendations they had to offer.

Have Prior Contact With MSU & Visit Campus

Many students emphasized the importance of early contact with the campus. One student's advice captured a deep understanding and familiarity with the academic, social, and physical environments at MSU.

> Take the time to visit professors in the program that you're going to be involved in. Go on a tour of the University, tour the library. Realize that it's structured differently, that you're going to be in classes with a lot more people, which is going to be both good and bad. You're going to have more of a support group if you open up your eyes and open up your arms and take in the other students around you. And it's also going to be different in the fact that your professors may be non-accessible, may have more than one class to teach, they may be involved in research, so they may be only on the University two days a week. It's something that I'm pondering working with at a community college somewhere advising transfer students, just because I found different ways to make my transition smooth. I can see it being difficult for other people. So tour the campus, get to know the campus, embrace

> the new friends that you make and don't let the differences overwhelm you. Accept them for the way the University is, and change the parts of you that you can to work within the system because the University is very much a system. It's an institution not in a bad way but everything is regulated by multiple groups of people and when you want to do something you have to work with those multiple groups of people. (16B, 6)

Connect With an Advisor & Gain Transfer Course Equivalency Information

Connecting with an advisor was a pivotal part of the early transition process for many students. Those that were not in contact with an advisor ahead of time wished that they had been. This allows for an opportunity to learn the specifics of their major program.

> My advice would be to definitely talk to an advisor before you get here both at the community college and here. And just to get to know as many different people as you can and have fun while you're down here and study hard because it's difficult, especially because of both the academic transition and social transition. (25B, 4)

Many students emphasized the importance of getting specific transfer course equivalency information well ahead of time. This could be done by visiting an advisor, or by looking on MSU's web site, where there is a comprehensive transfer course equivalency page. One student relayed the advice that he offered to his brother who was planning on transferring:

> "One thing that you can do so that you save your time, your money, everything, is to go meet with the advisor from the college you're going to." He knows the programs he's going into. I said, "Go to that college this summer. Meet with the advisor and work out a plan for what you need to do, and have them initial it, because then when you go back, say, "This is what you told me." You said when I transferred, these were the credits I was going to get. Have them initial it." I didn't do that, and because of that, I'm, like, eighteen credits behind, and that's a lot. (32B, 6)

Overall, many students reiterated the advantages of meeting with an advisor and finding out specific transfer credit information.

Live On-Campus

There was strong support from commuters as well as residential students to live on-campus. It helped to facilitate connection to other students as well as the campus culture. Those that did not live on-campus felt more disconnected, and had to take more initiative to connect and learn about MSU. A student living in a residence hall suggested, "Live on-campus because I can see it would be really, really hard to integrate yourself into the school while living off-campus, because you're kind of immersed in it [living on-campus]" (13B, 2). A commuter student agreed as well.

> From all the people that I have talked to, they say that they absolutely hated living in the dorms, and would never do it again, but they are glad they did it their first year to meet people and what not. So I'd say I kind of regret not going in the dorms at least the first semester. But I have enough friends down here from [my hometown] that occupy my time enough, and mainly friends from class and what not. But no, not as far as extracurricular activities. (4A, 4)

Fourteen students, out of the final sample of thirty, lived on-campus in the residence halls. Some of the students lived in McDonel Hall, which is targeted towards transfer and international students, while the rest were scattered in the other residence halls throughout campus. Some students found McDonel Hall less conducive to social interaction than other halls.

> It's harder to meet people in McDonel than in other halls. Because I've hung out and other halls, [I noticed] all the doors are open whereas in McDonel everybody shuts their doors and it's really quiet. It is better for studying and academics but as far socializing it's not what I would expect. (13A, 2)

McDonel was quite different from many students' expectations.

It's quiet. It's not at all like what they show on television with the

> doors all open and people walking around. That's not at all what it's like. Everybody's doors are pretty much closed all the time. It's a nice quiet hall; you can get a lot of studying done. (30A, 2)

So, although the students recommended living on-campus, whether or not it is best to cluster all transfer students into one hall is in question.

In general, similar to those living off-campus with friends, connecting tended to be easier for the on-campus students. Academically, they had easy access to study groups. Socially, the halls often made it easier to meet people and learn from fellow students. Access to student organization meetings and functions was also eased by students' on-campus living arrangements. The physical environment was easier to navigate since they did not have to commute to campus. They had easy, 24-hour access to campus facilities, such as the library, and could attend meetings and campus events with ease. Parking still impacted them when they wanted to go home or to work, but it was not the daily stressor that it was for the commuter students. Overall, students in the study saw strong benefits to living on-campus, or if that wasn't possible, to live with fellow students in an local neighborhood adjacent to campus.

Understand the Parking System

Parking was a salient issue for almost all of the students in the study, since the parking situation at MSU was incredibly different than at the community colleges. Among the many successions for understanding the parking system, one student captured a common piece of advice related to parking.

> ... worry about getting a parking pass too. I was worried about student loans and where I was going to live and I had all these different aspects of things that I had to pull together and a few things got overlooked and parking was one of them. When you get

> here and when you talk to people, parking is a huge deal. But not knowing that, I mean at the community college you just drove there and parked and there was always room to park there. You didn't have to worry about that. (23B, 4)

Get Involved On-Campus

Several students relayed the benefits of campus involvement, and suggested that future transfer students get involved as a form of connecting to campus and to assist with the overall adjustment process.

> Somehow, try and make that adjustment as quickly as possible. 'Cause the quicker you adjust, the easier school is going to be in getting involved and that's another big thing that to do is just to try and get involved in, you know, find out what your interests are and do something that you enjoy. (9B, 13)

Things MSU Can Do To Help

Although not specifically asked, some of the students offered advice to MSU about actions the university could take to assist with the transition process. One suggestion was a mentoring program that would allow new transfer students to connect with a fellow student through a formal project.

Another area that was often mentioned was that of strengthening contact between the advisors at the community college and MSU, as well as MSU contact with students while they were at the community college. One student suggests:

> The universities and the community colleges should talk to each other, like about different degrees, and transferability, because I found out just a week ago that I'm going to have to be here two more years instead of one more year, and that's really going to hurt me financially. Because my major requires a lot of classes that aren't offered at Community College, I ended up having to stay longer than I thought I was. It would be neat to find out for what majors you could really go to Community College and not have to stay in college for five years. (6B, 3)

Overall, the transfer students in the study had good advice to offer to future transfer students, as well as MSU. This information could be utilized to assist students in the subsequent years.

Summary

The five main themes, woven together, give a sense of the transition of community college transfer students throughout their first and second semesters at MSU. The themes help to create snapshots of the transition, while also coming together to paint a more complete picture of the primary aspects of their transition. Finally, the advice for future transfer students from the participants assists with creating interventions that can be implemented by community colleges, four-year universities, and transfer students themselves. The meaning of these findings is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview of the Study

Little extant literature addresses the full picture of the process of transition for community college transfer students over time at their new four-year institution. Most community college transfer students expect to succeed academically at their new four-year institutions due to their previous college experience. Similarly, the university structure assumes that students do not need as much assistance with transition as freshmen, and does not provide a great deal of structured transition programming, such as extended orientation and campus visit programs. Despite these assumptions, the culture and expectations of four-year institutions are vastly different from community colleges. Many students experience "transfer shock" (Hills 1965), which is defined by a drop in grade point average at the new four-year institution. In addition, a larger percentage of native students persist to graduation than transfer students (Bulkley, 1974; Hills, 1965). However, the transfer shock literature does not tell the full story of transfer student transition. Academic performance is only one part of students' experiences, and grades are the result of a complex process that has occurred throughout the semester. The transfer shock literature shows information on academic grades, but not on how these grades were achieved within the academic environment of the four-year university. In addition, the literature is relatively void of research on the transition that transfer students undergo within the social culture and physical environments of the four-year university, including how these various experiences interact with one another within the transition process for transfer students.

A great deal of research has been conducted on freshman transition and success issues, as well as transition issues for K-12 students. However, a more limited body of research is available about transfer student transition and success. There is not a clear sense of whether or not transfer students experience transition similarly to or different from freshmen. From availability of campus services, it appears that universities may believe transfers have limited adjustment issues but the literature is unclear. Traditional transition programming, such as orientation are much more comprehensive for freshman than for transfers. In addition, the studies on transfer students have focused on academic gains or losses, but have not dealt with transfer students' stories of their process of transition, and how they became a part of the university community over time.

There is concern within higher education regarding the increased enrollments in the community colleges and thus increased numbers of transfer students to four-year institutions (Cejda, 1997; Hills, 1965; Oliver, 1995; Watt, 1930). It appears four-year universities will continue to see increased numbers of applications from community college students wishing to transfer. Therefore, it is important that the community college transfer student transition process be studied further.

Townsend's (1995) and Laanan's (1998) work begins to paint a clearer picture of the experiences of transfer students, but more needs to be done, especially in terms of longitudinal data or studies with more than one data collection point. The desire to better understand community college transfer student transition leads to the development of many research questions that call for further investigation. The research question guiding this study was:

- What is the nature of transition for community college transfer students over their first semester at a large, four-year university?

More specifically:

- How do transfer students' experiences change between their first and second semester at MSU?
- How are the experiences similar or different for on- and off-campus students?

Using a qualitative research design with two data collection points, I studied how a group of community college transfer students proceeded through their first year at a four-year university. King's (1999) Consequential Transitions was used as a theoretical framework for the study, and helped to provide a broad lens for keeping in mind the developing relationship between the students and their new environments while assessing the data. Thirty-five community college transfer students were interviewed in January of their second semester at Michigan State University about their community college experiences and their first semester at MSU. Thirty students returned in late March or early April of this same term to recount their second semester's experiences, to reflectively compare their time at the community college to their time at MSU, as well as to compare their first semester at MSU to their second semester. Their stories led to the development of five main themes: Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating. Differences were also noted in terms of living arrangements. In addition, students in the study offered advice to future transfer students. Suggestions made by those in the study included having prior contact with MSU, visiting campus, connecting with an advisor, gaining transfer course equivalency information, living on-campus, understanding the parking system, and getting involved on-campus.

The study presented the unique opportunity to gather data in two time frames. This provided the ability to ask comparative questions in both interviews in order to measure change over time. The time lapse also enabled more reflective questions to be asked in the second interview, which greatly assisted in the development of the themes of familiarity and integrating.

Review of the Themes and Additional Findings

The five themes that emerged from the data were Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating. They were assessed within three different environments: academic, social, and physical. The academic environment included interactions in class, with faculty both in and out of the classroom, study groups, advisors, as well as information on career opportunities. The social environment included both formal and informal interactions with other students outside of the classroom through student organizations, parties, residence halls, apartment complexes, common areas on-campus, etc. Finally, the physical environment not only consisted of the bricks and mortar of the university but also campus structure in terms of how the campus services and departments function and are organized, campus logistics, overall campus culture, and parking. In addition, the physical environment included the finances that are required for schooling, since tuition and other expenses can be considered a structural requirement.

The themes come together as a more holistic, comprehensive picture of the variety of components that were present for the students in the study within their transition to MSU. Formal and informal learning resources, the first theme, were vital for students to find out critical information. Formal learning resources were a part of the official structure of MSU, and included orientation, faculty, student affairs professionals, and advisors. Informal learning resources were comprised of unofficial individuals who knew a great deal about MSU, such as friends and alumni. Initiative, or the gathering of information on their own, was pivotal to students' overall success. Connecting, the second theme, was concerned with the development of relationships with others in the academic, social, and physical environments. The third theme, familiarity was comprised of taking the basic information that students gathered to the level of internalizing the information, when students felt more comfortable with the environments. Negotiating, the fourth theme, occurred when students adjusted their behavior and surroundings as necessary in order to be successful within the academic, social, and physical environments. Finally, for some, integrating occurred, which was a developmental change as a result of the students' relation to the three environments, similar to Tinto's (1987) theory of freshmen integration, but including physical environment integration as well. Knowledge of the physical environment enhances the existing literature, and our understanding of transition. Integrating often included a shift in perception or identity. Additional findings woven into the themes included transition differences based on where students lived, be it on-campus, in an off-campus apartment with friends, or off-campus with relatives.

The themes generally move from a basic to a more comprehensive, internalized sense of the academic, social, and physical environments of the four-year university. At the same time, many things happened in parallel to each other. Students moved through the different themes throughout their time at MSU, and the themes are not entirely linear, especially since students are moving through three different environments. The following is a schema that shows how students move across all of the environments, and is an example of how students can traverse through the various themes. At the most fundamental level, learning resources are vital for collecting basic information. After initial contact with individuals who may have served as learning resources, it is possible to develop deeper relationships with them and thereby move to connecting. It is also essential to have the basic information in order for students to know how to effectively negotiate the environment, and actively and intentionally change their behaviors or surroundings in order to be more successful. Familiarity is inherently "stronger" than the mere information that learning resources provide; it is being comfortable with the information, and can include becoming a part of the four-year university community. Finally, integrating can only occur after familiarity has been reached. It is only then that experiences can be further reflected on, which can lead to a shift in perception or identity. Therefore, each theme is individually important to the transition of community college transfer students, but can also be looked at as a more inclusive package of components within the transition. The various themes will be individually and collectively woven into the implications discussed below.

Implications

The themes do not imply one right or wrong way to approach transfer student transition. Rather, the lived experiences of the students in this study provide a way of thinking about transfer, and the transitions that these students face over time more complexly. The themes provide a framework for understanding community college transfer student transition throughout the first year at a four-year university. By utilizing this frame, community colleges, four-year universities and the students themselves can better understand the process and thus promote the development of interventions to assist with the process over time. The themes show a set of skills that may be helpful to students in transition. The results of this study have broad implications for the ways in which transfer student transition is perceived by students, faculty, and administrators at both community colleges and universities.

There are three key stakeholders of the results of this study: transfer students, community colleges, and four-year universities. Transfer student transition is a collaborative process between the three, working together to assist with the transition. Therefore, specific suggestions for the three groups are woven into the discussion areas below. The heart of the theoretical framework of this study, King's (1999) Consequential Transition, focused on the relation between person and environment. In line with that notion, the implications for this study emphasize the relationships between the three constituencies.

The suggestions are not to negate the important, developmental transition process or to side step it, but rather to help it to begin sooner, thus ending the feeling of being a newcomer to the environments sooner. That way, students can feel a sense of membership rather than attend to feelings of newness for as long. This will assist students by freeing up energy for the reaching their goals at the four-year university.

Integrated discussion and implication areas follow, and include overlying structural considerations, traditional institutionally-based transition programming, increased learning connections, and community college and four-year university advising implications. Finally, other areas of application will be discussed.

Overlying Structural Considerations

There are a few areas that are important to be mindful of when considering implications of transition and interventions for transfer students. One is looking more closely at the theme of negotiating, especially as it interweaves with the other four transition themes. Another is the notion of membership; are there ways to help transfer students feel like a part of the community sooner, that is in MSU's case, "Become a Spartan"? In addition, the academic environment as well as the campus structural differences between community colleges and four-year universities are important to keep in mind in order to develop appropriate programming for each unique campus. These broad discussion areas provide a context for the more specific implication sections that follow later in the chapter.

Negotiating. Negotiating was pivotal to the overall transition process for students, and is defined as strategies the students used to shape their behavior, experiences, and surroundings in order to be more successful at the four-year university. Negotiating was a key component for moving through all the themes. The themes as a whole meld the important steps that students take in order to be successful within their transition to MSU. The negotiating that was portrayed was very dynamic between the students and their environments, and showed that students had quite a bit of control in changing their behaviors and environments in order to be academically successful. The data presented an empowering portrayal of transfer student transition is consistent with the study's theoretical framework of consequential transition (Beach, 1999), positing that the relation between individuals and their environments is dynamic, and that both the individual and the activity play key roles in the relationship. This is in contrast to frames such as person-environment fit (Lewin, 1935), which places the person in a stagnate environment over which they have little control. The data showed that the environment was far from immovable for these students. Transition is not just something that happens to students; they have control over the process. They may not have control over all the components, but they do have control in how they choose to act in accordance to their individual situation, such as where they live (within financial constraints), who they live with, their major, what classes they take, who they seek out for help, and how they spend their time. There are certain aspects of the four-year university that are unchangeable, such as overall size and location. However, the internal workings, as evidenced by the students' experiences, are often negotiable. This is a very different perspective than previous studies that show that students do not have control over much of the situation, and have to cope with what is given to them (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992). Coping in the traditional psychological sense was not seen in the students in this study. Overall, the premises and assumptions of the traditional coping literature as well as the person-environment fit literature did not hold for the students in this study. Additional future research that looks at the environment as dynamic and the students as empowered will be important to further refine this new look at the environment.

It is important for prospective and current transfer students to realize early on that they have control over many components of their circumstances. Student mentoring programs as well as professionals at both community colleges and four-year universities need to give students this information, in order to better inform them about the possibilities for their transition process. Having this knowledge helps students to prepare for and traverse their transition process. It helps to prepare them for the realities of the four-year university while keeping in mind that they do have some power over their own situation. Suggestions on how each of these parties can assist will be discussed later in this chapter.

"Becoming a Spartan." Astin (1993) found that frequent peer group interaction and strong sense of community impacted positively on students' educational attainment. Similarly, many students in this study stressed the importance of feeling a part of the campus community, and how this greatly impacted their satisfaction and success. The site of the study was a campus where membership is a strongly held value, and communicated in many ways to students. Therefore, when considering programmatic efforts, are there ways to help transfer students become familiar and feel a sense of belonging sooner? Harnessing this feeling of membership can help move students through components of the transition and ease the possible repercussions of not knowing about the academic, social and physical environments. This can happen in a variety of ways. In this study, a pivotal part of the process of moving to familiarity and in some cases, integrating, was the feeling of "becoming" a Spartan, which for many meant full membership in of the MSU community. When do transfer students "become" Spartans? The themes of familiarity and integrating help to frame interventions that increase feelings of membership and potentially speed up the process for transfer students. Familiarity is related to feeling a part of things, and inevitably, membership in the four-year university community. Integrating also plays a key role in membership, as it includes a shift in identity. If we can create ways to have the transition happen more smoothly, it will increase satisfaction and retention and the overall success of transfer students in reaching their goals.

Four-Year University Academic Environment. The academic environment portrayed by the students in this study was quite different from some who consider the four-year university almost Darwinian in its approach to academic success for both transfer and native students, that only the strongest will survive (Boice, 1992; Townsend, 1995). In contrast, the students in the study painted a picture of a demanding yet fair academic environment. The students felt welcomed by faculty and knew that instructors cared about their success. However, students learned from faculty that they had to use their own initiative to seek out help when needed. The academic environment did not handhold, but it was not "sink or swim" either. Although some have reported a level of competitiveness in the four-year university classroom, experienced by lack of willingness of fellow students to help each other, and limited comfort in asking questions in class (Kuznak, 1972; Townsend, 1995), the students in this study reported friendly classmates with a willingness to work in groups on projects. Overall, it is interesting that the perceptions of the academic environment differed for students in this study when compared to the results of others such as Townsend, yet it is difficult to tell which factors led to the friendly perceptions of the academic environment, since this study only encompassed one four-year university campus, and students who were retained by the institution for the second term.

Campus Structure. We need to look at how the individual components of the university can assist and facilitate various aspects of the transition. At the same time, we need to make the transfer process more comprehensive and streamlined. This study showed that campus organizational structures and differences between community colleges and four-year institutions can affect transition and transfer processes in many ways.

For example, community college structures and campus organization tend to be centralized. At the heart of the community college mission is the goal of serving broad audiences in a personalized way (Griffith & Conner, 1994). The total full-time enrollment at community colleges tends to be smaller, staff to student ratios are smaller, and the personal attention to individual students may be greater at community colleges than four-year universities. Often, they are structurally set up in a "one-stop shopping" structure, in which students have access to a variety of services within one centralized location and therefore seem to be more holistic environments.

Conversely, four-year universities are more segmented; student services are often very decentralized. It is hard for students to "split" parts of themselves at four-year universities in order to survive within a structure of separate pockets of offices and services. This is a possible reason why some students struggle at the four-year university. They must find out about and thrive in many different pieces of campus life that encompass the academic, social, and physical environments at the university. Therefore, as we develop programming for transfer students, it is important to prepare students and assist them with the realities of a decentralized campus structure. The decentralized environmental impact can be softened by participation in a living-learning option at the four-year university, and by developing an advising relationship in which the advisor serves as guide for navigating the decentralized system.

Traditional Institutionally-based Transition Programming

Many types of programming are currently done at community colleges and four-year universities to assist with student transition. Based on this study, the following are specific suggestions of how such programs could be implemented or improved upon within community colleges and four-year universities. These ideas would be helpful in the specific example of MSU, and could be utilized by other four-year universities, as well.

Transfer Admissions and Campus Visits. A primary concern with transfer admissions is the timing of application and acceptance to the four-year university. It is imperative that the admission process takes place in a timely fashion that allows students to visit campus ahead of time, and attend the regularly scheduled transfer orientation. Enrollment pressures may sometimes cause four-year universities to admit students very late in order to meet yield, but this practice negatively disadvantages transfer students.

Four-year universities need to take an active role in interacting with community college transfer students before, during, and after transfer. For example, admissions trips to community colleges could be expanded to include academic advisors along with admissions officers. It is impractical to have advisors from all possible majors, but if advisors from the most common transfer majors could rotate through visits, this would be very helpful to the prospective transfer students at the CC. If they met an advisor at an information fair on their own campus, students would likely be more comfortable setting up a campus visit to MSU to talk to the advisor in greater depth.

Students in the study strongly suggested visiting campus and meeting with an advisor ahead of time as a means of smoothing over surprises, increasing awareness of campus services, and beginning a relationship with an academic advisor. Universities could encourage prospective transfer students more directly to visit campus, especially if they do not make a concerted effort to formalize campus visits for transfer students. Widespread programming for freshmen campus visits is commonly in place, but the same effort is not given to transfer students. Customized programming could facilitate early connecting to the academic, social, and physical environments and provide students with opportunities to seek out housing information, peer mentoring information, and to get a sense of campus life.

Orientation. Orientation is a formal learning resource existing in some form at most colleges and universities that could be enhanced to provide even better service to transfer students. For some of the students in this study, connecting with fellow students at orientation laid the foundation for future friendships that carried over to the school year. There is also the opportunity for more in-depth knowledge of the student's major and advisor to be gathered, which enhances the knowledge gained from earlier campus contact and visits. A handout developed from the transfer advice students gave in this study could be distributed and used to facilitate discussions with students about the perceived realities of the university, and the strategies for transitioning to the academic, social, and physical environments. One concern some students have in terms of orientation is the very name of the program, since they have already been oriented to college. Students may be more receptive of the program if it was called something other than orientation, such as Transfer Day. Overall, existing orientation programs could be enhanced to further assist community college transfer students with their transition to the four-year university.

Transfer Orientation Seminar Courses. Transfer orientation seminar courses are potential tools for facilitating transfer student transition. A variety of models are suggested that can be customized to meet the needs of individual community colleges and four-year universities. Possibilities include pre-transfer seminar courses taught at the community college or four-year universities, as well as orientation courses taught at the four-year university taken by students during the first semester after transfer.

A pre-transfer orientation course taught at the community college could facilitate the understanding and early use of learning resources at the university. The course could help students begin connecting to the academic, social, and physical environments of the university by including detailed information of each, and giving the students hands-on experience through campus tours, visits to various facilities at the four-year university campus, and making appointments with university advisors. Advisors typically meet with prospective students regardless of admission status. Therefore, students in the pre-orientation seminar would have access to advisors. Many students suggested that prior contact with MSU was helpful or would have been helpful. The orientation course would be a formal structure of prior contact. It would also be an additional way that the community college and the university could collaborate. By taking place on the community college campus, community college advisors and transfer center staff could be involved with the course, which would help to develop stronger bonds between community college and four-year university staff.

An alternative approach for feeder schools in close proximity to the four-year university would be to hold the pre-orientation seminar course on the university campus. This would allow students to experience first-hand parking and campus logistics, yet on a smaller scale than they will experience during their first full-time semester at the four-year university. Increased exposure to the four-year university campus community will help students feel a part of things and possibly move to familiarity sooner.

Another effort that four-year universities could undertake is to develop a transfer orientation seminar. Freshmen orientation seminars have had a great deal of success in assisting freshmen with adjustment to college (Fidler & Fidler, 1991). It is projected that a seminar designed exclusively for transfer students would have comparable results. However, orientation seminars are typically not considered for or tailored to transfer students. Depending on the logistics of the individual situation, this course could be in addition to or instead of one offered at the community college. Such a course would be taken during a transfer students' first semester at the university, and would meet weekly throughout the term, similar to freshmen orientation courses. Early use of learning resources, connecting and familiarity with the university, can help to facilitate student satisfaction sooner within the new university environment. Although it costs them a credit, time, and money, an orientation seminar would be an excellent way for students to move to familiarity during their first semester. It would give them an opportunity to connect with fellow transfer students, so they do not feel alone in the process as well as access to several formal learning resources. A transfer orientation seminar would inform transfer students about the environment and 'survival strategies'.

The transfer orientation seminar at the four-year university can take many forms, depending on the individual structure of the campus environment and the timing of student transfer. At smaller institutions, a university-wide course may be appropriate. For larger institutions, there are advantages to offering separate courses for individual colleges or majors. The students in the study reported the value of connecting to students in their major who shared similar interests as well as academic requirements. The students also recounted the excitement of finally taking courses of interest in their major at the four-year university, as opposed to the general education courses often taken at the community college. Therefore, an orientation course housed in their major would be appealing. It presents the opportunity for departments to customize the information presented to be the most beneficial to their academic majors. Departments could also utilize the seminar to introduce the students to the department faculty, who are valuable formal learning resources, allowing students to connect to the academic environment in a timely fashion. Also, a major specific seminar enables students to find out about possible research opportunities with faculty, which further enhances their academic connections. Timing of transfer may differentiate which type of course would be more beneficial as well. For students transferring fewer credits, a general university course may be more appropriate, while students transferring in more credits may prefer a course tailored to their majors. Overall, a transfer orientation seminar course could be a valuable tool to introduce students to learning resources, and assist students in moving from connecting to familiarity, and possibly, to integrating.

Increased Learning Connections

Four-year universities can play a pivotal role in transfer students' transition processes. Beach (1999) suggests, "We need to figure out how identity making...can become an institutionally sanctioned part of acquiring knowledge and skills in classrooms in ways that it currently is not, but is in most other activities in which students participate" (p. 132). This idea can be expanded in the university environment to include the total campus experience. Students reported that informal learning resources, such as friends who were native MSU students, were the most highly utilized resource for learning about the academic, social, and physical environments of the university. This is similar to the findings of Robbins and Tank (1995), who report that college students use informal support networks more than formal support services, such as counseling centers. Therefore, programs providing opportunities for peer interaction may prove beneficial. Native students convey valuable information about the perceived realities of the four-year university and campus services, as well as portray how important it is to be proactive within the campus. Therefore, creating more opportunities for informal networking with other students is beneficial to transfer students. Student organizations, mentoring programs, and special networking sessions at both the community college and four-year universities are some examples of informal networking opportunities that may just need to be more strongly encouraged, or developed if they are not in place. Native students and transfer students who have already completed a year at the four-year institution could be recruited to interact with prospective and current transfer students in a variety of ways. Some specific examples are elaborated on below.

Campus Involvement. Being involved on campus is a great way to connect to the social environment at the four-year university (Astin, 1984). Many of the students in the study concurred with Astin's findings and advocated being involved in campus activities as a way to connect to and feel a part of the university. Academically related clubs provide information about internships and career opportunities, and serve as resources about the academic field, which help solidify students' interest in the area. As noted by many students in the study, it is a means of getting to know fellow students. This can be done in both formal and informal ways, through student organizations, sporting events, or establishments in the local community. Overall, it is important that students interact with peers outside of the classroom environment in order to develop or solidify quality relationships, which will provide them with informal learning resources, help them with connecting, and inevitably move them towards familiarity.

Mentor programs. Informal learning resources, primarily friends, were highly utilized by transfer students. A formal peer mentor program may facilitate the use of informal learning resources, as well as assist with connecting to peers. This allows transfer students to connect and feel a part of the four-year university by getting to know fellow students who have prior experience with the university's academic, social, and physical environments. Formal mentoring programs would be in line with Astin's (1993) suggestions for fostering peer groups by including a "foundation on which identification can occur...[and] provide opportunities to interact on a sustained basis (p. 423)." Student mentors can be native students as well as transfer students who already made a successful transition to the four-year university. New community college transfer students would have a great deal to gain from both types of students.

At MSU, a mentoring program for new freshmen and transfer students within the Lyman Briggs School residential program is underway. One of the students in the study was taking part in it, and the student made sure that transfer students were included and would be assigned to mentors along with incoming freshmen. The student was very excited at the prospect of giving back to incoming transfer students, and hoped that the program in the future would help to facilitate the transfer process for other new students.

On-campus living. Consistent with Astin's (1993) findings, student experiences in the study differed for on- and off-campus students. The advice is clear from the students that were interviewed in the study: live on-campus. They indicated that living on-campus increased opportunities to integrate into the academic, social, and physical environments. This was especially true within the social environment, in helping students find their niche faster.

Similar to Astin's (1984) results, students in the study who lived on-campus were more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities. The students attributed this to the close proximity of campus events and student organization meetings, as well as encouragement from neighbors in the residence halls to attend the activities. Those that did not live on-campus were still strongly advantaged if they lived with other MSU students. This provided immediate access to an informal learning resource, and a connection with a pre-established social network through getting to know their roommate's friends. Townsend (1995) relayed that commuter students may have fewer opportunities to integrate into a university's social system. The students in this study concur with Townsend's findings. By comparison, commuter students had to go more out of their way to connect to the social environment. This was similar to Townsend's findings that commuter students had to work harder to integrate into the university social system.

Living-learning options are an ideal way for transfer students to be introduced to the overall campus and become a virtually instant member of a subset of campus community. Living-learning options can take many forms, and be based on any number of special topics pertinent to students at that particular four-year institution. For example, Lyman Briggs School (LBS), a science-based living learning option on MSU's campus, created a unique opportunity for one student in the study that he highly recommended to others. LBS provided for a situation in which the academic, social, and physical environments could be blended into a manageable microcosm within Holmes Hall where LBS is housed. In general, the way that living-learning options provide student services is closer to that of the centralized service models at community colleges. Similar to Terenzini et al.'s (1996) findings, living-learning options would be a method of allowing out-of-class experiences to influence student learning. Overall, transfer students' transitions would be benefited by access to and participation in living-learning options.

Implications of the recommendation to live on-campus exist for the four-year university as well. On-campus housing is not always available for transfer students at every four-year university. This exclusionary practice by some institutions should be closely examined, as it is likely disadvantaging transfer students. Other four-year institutions may choose to cluster transfer students into one building. For some students in this study, living with many other transfer students worked out well, while others found the targeted transfer and international student hall not as socially open as others. While it is clear the students in this study found living with other students beneficial, it may not be the best situation to have all the transfer students together. It appears that living-learning options should be presented to transfer students as viable options for on-campus housing. Four-year university and community college officials through advising and transfer admissions counseling can share advice in terms of beneficial living arrangements with the students.

Community College and Four-Year University Advising Implications

The results of this study have wide-spread implication for academic advising, including collaboration efforts between community college and four-year university advisors, the application of the themes to advising practice, as well as the overall benefits of academic advising for students.

Collaboration between Community College and Four-Year University Academic Advisors. Many of the students in the study suggested that further communication between the community college and the four-year university would have been helpful. They purport that increased knowledge and information about university programs and transfer credits would help community college advising to be more productive. Augmented institutional linkages to address these transfer concerns could be implemented in a variety of ways. For example, four-year universities could sponsor programming at community colleges, such as information fairs, meetings with CC advisors, as well as a pre-transfer orientation course taught at the CC for students planning to transfer to the four-year university the following semester.

Communication between community college and four-year university advisors is also critical to providing information relevant to student transfer. Programming and structures should be in place to help facilitate the establishment and maintenance of relationships among advisors. For example, at present, MSU holds information sessions with community college advisors that help facilitate communication. These could be expanded to include increased opportunities for advisors from all institutions to mingle and share information. The students' perceptions were that more needed to be done to communicate information. Therefore, increasing community college advisor attendance at university information meetings would be helpful. A culture needs to be established in which community college advisors feel comfortable calling university advisors for specific information when working with students. Therefore, knowledge of exactly who to contact is critical. Development of such a culture can be assisted through advisor interactions at information meetings and fairs held at both the community college and the four-year university.

Overall, increased communication and collaboration between community colleges and four-year universities, especially in terms of advising, would greatly assist in potentially smoother transitions that can lead to increased satisfaction and retention of community college transfer students.

Application of the Themes to Advising Practice. The data from this study can assist academic advisors in offering sociocultural coping strategies to students during the process of the advising relationship that will help transfer students transition to the university. The themes convey potential issues in transition that advisors can discuss with their students, and help to emphasize that there is not one "right" way to approach and go through transition. The students in this study all had experiences related to the themes, yet they approached the themes in very different ways. Negotiating is an especially poignant example. All of the students negotiated in one way or another, but the variety of ways this occurred was quite extensive, from sitting in the same seat in class each day in order to meet people, to changing majors in order to avoid taking laboratory courses, to taking the bus in order to avoid dealing with parking on-campus. Therefore, there is no cookie cutter way to transition to the four-year university. However, having a better understanding of the themes allows practitioners to convey the themes to students in a broad way, emphasizing that they can be utilized to fit each students' unique transition experience, and to help facilitate that process. The academic advisor can play a key role in conveying the broad-based skills that emerged from this study, and help students think about and prepare for the potential transition issues conveyed by the themes that may arise.

Advisors can use the themes within their advising practices, not only with transfer students, but also native students. Advisors can help their students to seek out formal and informal learning resources, as well as to help students see a need to be proactive and take initiative. Advisors are also in a position to help students connect through the advising relationship, as well as through other relationships that students develop as a result of seeking out learning resources. Advisors can help students see that seeking out learning resources has more potential than just getting information, and can also lead to developing relationships. Therefore, advisors can assist all of their students by having a sense of transition issues as relayed in this study.

Benefits of Academic Advising for Students. Meeting with an academic advisor ahead of time is of special importance. Many of the students who were not in touch with advisors ahead of time were very disappointed with how their courses transferred. Many students were also disappointed that it was going to take additional time or a great deal of summer courses to graduate on time. Prior contact with an academic advisor would help to clear up these transfer credit issues. Armed with this information, the students can then negotiate their environment to optimize reaching their academic goals in a timely fashion. One example of such negotiation prior to actually arriving at the university would be a student's decision to change their courses during the last semester at the community college to more appropriately fit academic course planning goals and articulation agreements at the university. Meeting with a university advisor before transferring will help to confirm or deny their interest in the major. If they find they are not interested, the students can negotiate the environment by changing their major sooner, which will assist in a timely graduation. Overall, the more information students have, the easier the transition will be.

Dissemination of knowledge is one area where advisors can be especially helpful to students. Although the campus structure of the four-year university is often fragmented, academic advisors can serve as guides to help put the pieces together. Students often looked for advisors to give specific advice, which assisted in moving students to familiarity. Inevitably, the students must experience campus life for themselves in order to move through their transition. However, advisors can provide information to get them on the right path sooner.

Ideas For Future Research

The study has provided knowledge of the process of transition for community college transfer students throughout their first year at MSU. However, it leaves many questions unanswered that could be the subjects of future research.

Interviewing students before as well as very soon after transfer may produce different results from this study. Having 'in the moment' data as opposed to retrospective information may glean different results. Also, having information beyond the second semester may prove useful to see long-term retention and overall success of the transfer student. This would also help in seeing if any interventions continue to be valued over time.

It would be quite interesting to take a closer look at how proactive the transfer student is, and potentially look at locus-of-control, in terms of seeing if students believe that they hold power or if events are left to chance. Some students were very actively engaged in interacting with the college environment, while others thought that things were happening to them. This difference in perception could be further explored.

It would also be intriguing to study non-traditional aged students in order to compare their experiences to the more traditional aged students in this study. A comparative study between native freshmen and transfer students looking at the similarities and differences in their transition process to the university would also assist in further understanding both groups. It is still unclear whether the process of transition was related to the developmental place or maturity level of the transfer students. Therefore, comparative studies of transfer students as well as native freshmen and native juniors may offer more information about whether or not general maturity plays a role in transition.

Another possibility for future research is mapping out the decision to transfer including all the social, financial, and academic factors that impact the decision. This would provide a more thorough context of the student's situation before transfer and potential transition issue differences.

The sample in this study was diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender, and was similar to the overall diversity of MSU as a whole. However, no analysis was done to look at similarities or difference of experience or transition based on gender or ethnicity. In addition, no data were gathered in terms of the sexual orientation of the students in the study. Therefore, it will be important for future studies to provide further insight into these areas.

The process of transition as outlined in this study could also speak to the transition experience of new masters and doctoral students within their program. Masters students are transitioning from the expectations and structure of undergraduate courses to the new demands of graduate school. Doctoral students have prior knowledge from their master's programs similar to transfer students' prior knowledge from the community college. Many have concerns surrounding how to find information, how to connect, what changes they need to make to succeed, and finally, feeling a part of their new community. Further research would need to be conducted to see if the model outlined above holds true for masters and doctoral students.

Throughout the study, especially in terms of the integrating theme, an overarching finding was that a shift in identity sometimes occurred during the transition. However, a more thorough study looking specifically at identity development and identity transformation would be very helpful in order to delve more thoroughly into this topic. The implications could be quite profound for how transfer students are looked at in the future.

Conclusion

Overall, the implications of the study point to what community colleges and four-year universities can do to facilitate transition, and also to what students can do to help their own transition process. Initiative is a key component of the transition process. Students in the study were clear that transfer students must seek out and utilize resources on their own. Help will not always come to them; students must go to the help. The students in this study became competent citizens of MSU, who were well on their way to reaching their long-term goals. They were committed students who took a great deal of responsibility for their education, including a considerable individual financial investment. There is a great deal that the transfer students can do to help facilitate their own transition process. If future transfer students follow through with the advice offered by the students in this study, their overall transition process could benefit greatly.

The process of transfer student transition looks very different in this study than in the results of other studies. It does not deal with credits; it does not deal with numerical grade point averages. Rather, it captures the overall experiences of community college transfer students as they proceed through their first year at a four-year institution. In the future, it is important that this process approach be carried further with continuous studies at other four-year institutions, as well as studies starting with students while they are still at the community college. This will help to paint an even clearer picture of the process of transition as a developmental model with identity transformation implications.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEW ONE

(Introduce myself and the study)

- ☐ Tell me about your high school experience

  How would you describe the academic environment at your high school?
- ☐ Tell me about your community college experience
  - o How did you decide to attend the community college?
  - o Who did you go to for support for making it through school?
  - o Any social involvements?
  - o How would you describe the academic environment at the community college?
- ☐ Tell me about your decision to transfer to Michigan State University (MSU)
  - o What were you looking forward to?
  - o Orientation?
- ☐ What concerns did you have about coming to MSU, if any, and how do you feel about those now? Biggest challenge?
- ☐ Tell me about your experiences at MSU
  - o How would you describe the academic environment at MSU?
  - o Have your perceptions about MSU changed since you arrived? If yes, how?
  - o How did you think you'd do academically, and how are your classes going so far? Study habits, time management?
  - o Where are you living?
- ☐ Please describe a specific problem, preferably school related, and the ways it has impacted you, ways you have approached the situation, how

you strived to resolve it, key players in the situation, etc.

☐ Any further comments you would like to add overall?

QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEW TWO

(Reintroduce myself and the study)

- How are things going this semester?
    - Academically?
    - Non-academic, Anything out side of class, Social network, social involvement?
    - How do they compare to last semester?

How do your experiences here compare to those at cc?

- Last semester, you said that your biggest challenge was _____. How is it now?
- Other challenges, still working on or that feel more resolved?
- What has impacted you the most/been most significant throughout your time here?
- Any surprises, i.e. something you weren't expecting?
- Anything you wish you would have known?

Last time we talked, you had mentioned ________ as a specific problem you had to resolve. Can you tell me about that now that more time has passed?

- Who do you go to for support for making it through school? Has this changed? How?

What things or people helped you the most with your transition to MSU?

- In thinking about your overall satisfaction with your experiences at MSU, in what ways are you satisfied or dissatisfied?
- What advice would you offer to future transfers? Specific strategies?
- Any further comments you would like to add overall?

APPENDIX II

RECRUITMENT EMAIL AND PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

RECRUITMENT E- MAIL

Dear Transfer Student:

As a community college transfer student attending MSU, you have a unique set of experiences. We are calling on you for assistance in gaining a better sense of the experiences of community college transfer students over time.

Participants are needed for a study that is concerned with gaining a better understanding of the transition issues of community college transfer students. The study hopes to gain insights into the experiences that transfer students have as new MSU students. It will provide you with the opportunity to tell your story and reflect on your experiences. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from the study will be used in the future to develop intervention programs that will assist future transfer students with their transition.

Participants will be interviewed on two occasions over time during spring semester on campus for one to one and a half hours per interview about their experiences as transfer students at MSU, including social and academic aspects of their transition.

We understand your time is valuable. You will receive a **$20 GIFT CERTIFICATE to the MSU BOOKSTORE** after the second interview, in order to encourage participation and compensate you for your time.

If you are interested in assisting with this study, please respond to this email, indicating your willingness to participate in the study, and to be contacted for interviews. Please indicate dates and times that are best for you in the upcoming weeks to interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any time you wish. Your responses will remain confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

The final, comprehensive results of the study will be shared with MSU Office of Admissions and Scholarships, and will hopefully assist with future interactions with transfer students. The data supplied to Admissions will maintain the confidentiality of the participants, and will not identify specific students' names.

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact Catherine Flaga at (517) 353-9833 or flaga@msu.edu or Dr. Marilyn Amey at amey@msu.edu. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated, and will assist future transfer students to MSU.

Sincerely,

Catherine T. Flaga	Marilyn Amey
Doctoral Student	Associate Professor
Department of Educational Admin.	Department of Educational Admin.
Michigan State University	Michigan State University

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The study you are being asked to participate in is concerned with gaining a better understanding of the transition issues of community college transfer students. I hope to gain insights into the experiences that transfer students have as new MSU students. It will provide you with the opportunity to tell your story and reflect on your experiences. The knowledge gained from the study may be used in the future to develop intervention programs that will assist future transfer students with their transition. The final, comprehensive results of the study will be shared with MSU Office of Admissions and Scholarships, and will hopefully assist with future interactions with transfer students. The data supplied to Admissions will maintain the confidentiality of the participants, and will not identify specific students' names.

During the interview session, you will be asked questions about your experiences as a transfer student at MSU, including social and academic aspects of your transition. The interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours. In addition, you will be contacted during the spring semester to set up a follow-up interview, which will last approximately one to one and a half hours.

You will receive a $20 gift certificate to the MSU Bookstore after the second interview, in order to encourage participation and compensate you for your time.

The interview will be tape-recorded. The information I collect from you will not be used in any way that would reflect on you personally. What you say to me will be held in confidence, and I will not use your real name in any reporting of data. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can discontinue at any time. You have the option to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the interview.

If you desire further information about this research, you may contact:

Catherine T. Flaga
Michigan State University
103 Natural Science Building
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 353-9833
flaga@pilot.msu.edu

Marilyn Amey
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Admin.
Michigan State University
(517) 432-1056
amey@msu.edu

If you desire further information about participants' rights as human subjects of research, you may contact: David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (517) 355-2180

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign below.

By signing, you agree to participate in this study. You verify that the purposes of the study have been explained to you, and that your name will not be used in any analyses or report of the data. You also grant permission to be quoted in any reports that are written about this study, provided that your name is not used in these reports.

Full Name (please print)__________________________________Date __________

Signature ____

REFERENCES

Algera, J. A. (1983). "Objective" and perceived task characteristics as a determinant of reactions by task performers. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 56*(2), 95-107.

Anderson, S. A., & Fleming, W. M. (1986). Late adolescents' home-leaving strategies: Predicting ego identity and college adjustment. *Adolescence, 21*(82), 453-459.

Aspinwall, L. G., and Taylor, S. E. (1992). Modeling cognitive adaptation: A longitudinal investigation of the impact of individual differences and coping on college adjustment and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*(6), 989-1003.

Astin, A. W. (1984/1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), pp. 518-29.

Astin, A. W. (1984, July). Student involvement: A theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25*(4). pp. 297-308.

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Baltes, P. B., Staudinger, U. M., & Lindenberger, U. (1999). Lifespan psychology: Theory and application to intellectual functioning. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50,* 471-507.

Barker, R. G., & Gump, P. V. (1964). *Big school, small school.* Stanford, CA: Stanford.

Barone, C., Trickett, E. J., Schmid, K. D., & Leone, P. E. (1993). Transition tasks and resources: An ecological approach to life after high school. In L. A. Jason, K. E. Danner, & K. S. Kurasaki, (eds.), *Prevention and school transitions* (pp. 179-204). New York: Haworth.

Bartlett, C., & Abell, P. (1995). *Understanding the transfer students—Or are we?* (Eric Document Reproduction Service no. ED381200)

Beach, K. D. (1999). Consequential transitions: A sociocultural expedition beyond transfer in education. In *Review of Research in Education,* Vol 24. American Educational Research Association.

Betts, N. M., Dirkx, J., & Ruud, J. (1993). Using a critical incident technique to develop nutrition information materials for adults with low literacy skills. *Journal of Nutritional Education, 25*(4), 208-212.

Boice, R. (1992). The New Faculty Member. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Bulkley, K. V. (1974). *A study of the academic achievement and graduation rate of transfer students to Michigan State University from two-year and four-year institutions.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Caplan, R. D. & Van Harrison, R. (1993). Person-environment fit theory: Some history, recent developments, and future directions. *Journal of Social Issues, 49*(4), 253-75.

Causey, D. L. & Dubow, E. F. (1993). Negotiating the transition to junior high school: The contributions of coping strategies and perceptions of the school environment. In L. A. Jason, K. E. Danner, & K. S. Kurasaki, (eds.), *Prevention and school transitions* (pp. 59-81). New York: Haworth.

Cejda, B. D. (1997). An examination of transfer shock in academic disciplines. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 21*, 279-288.

Clark, K. K., Bormann, C. A., Cropanzano, R. S., & James, K. (1995). Validation evidence for three coping measures. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 65*(3), 434-55.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (1989). *The American community college.* 2nd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Cohen, F., & Lazarus, R. L. (1979). Coping with the stresses of illness. In G. C. Stone, F. Cohen, & N. E. Adler (Eds.), *Health psychology* (pp. 217-254). San Francisico: Jossey-Bass.

Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1985). *The NEO Personality Inventory manual.* Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

De Rivera, J. (1986). The "objective-behavioral" environment of Isidor Chein. *Environment and Behavior, 18*(1), 95-108.

Delvin, A. S. (1996). Survival skills training during freshman orientation: Its role in college adjustment. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*(3), 324-334.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., (Eds) (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Diaz, P. E. (1992). Effects of Transfer on Academic Performance of Community College Students at the Four-Year Institution. *Community Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice, 16*(3), 279-91.

Donaldson, J. F., & Graham, S. W. (1999). A model of college outcomes for adults. *Adult Education Quarterly, 50*(1), 24-40.

Dougherty, K. J. (1992). Community Colleges and Baccalaureate Attainment. *Journal of Higher Education, 63*(2), 188-214.

Dougherty, K. J. (1994). *The contradictory college: The conflicting origins, impacts, and futures of the community college.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Eagan, A. & Walsh, W. B. (1995). Person-environment congruence and coping strategies. *Career Development Quarterly, 43*(3), 246-56

Eaton, J. S. (1994). All access is not equal: the need for collegiate education in community colleges. In Arthur M. Cohen (Vol. Ed.), New *Directions for Community Colleges: Vol. 86. Relating Curriculum and Transfer* (pp. 3-11). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin, 51*(4), 327-57.

Fidler, P. P. & Fidler, D. S. (1991). *First national survey on freshman seminar programs: Findings, conclusions, and recommendations.* Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service no. ED343519)

Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R. S. (1985). If it changes it must be a process: Study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*(1), 150-70.

Freud, A. (1937). *The ego and the mechanisms of defense.* London: Hogarth.

Gallagher, D. J. (1996). Personality, coping, and objective outcomes: Extraversion, neuroticism, coping styles, and academic performance. *Personality and Individual Differences, 21*(3), 421-429.

Goldman, B. A. & Mitchel, D. F. (1996). *Directory of unpublished experimental mental measures.* Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Graham, W. K. (1976). Commensurate characterization of persons, groups, and organizations: Development of the trait ascription questionnaire (TAQ). *Human Relations, 29*(7), 607-22.

Graham, S., & Dallam, J. (1986). Academic probation as a measure of performance: Contrasting transfer students to native students. *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice, 10,* 23-24.

Griffith, M., & Connor, A. (1994). *Democracy's open door: The community college in America's future.* Portsmmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Hampton, G. (1991). Coping with person-environment incongruence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 21*(15), 1277-92.

Hayes, J. & Allinson, C. (1993). Matching learning style and instructional strategy: An application of the person-environment interaction paradigm. *Perceptual & Motor Skills, 76*(1), 63-79.

Hills, J. R. (1965). Transfer shock: The academic performance of the junior college transfer. *Journal of Experimental Education, 33*(Spring), 201-216.

Holahan, C. J., & Moos, R. H. (1981). Social support and psychological distress: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 90,* 365-370.

House, J. S. (1981). Social structure and personality. In Morris Rosenberg & Ralph Turner (Eds.), *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives* (pp. 525-61). Basic Books.

Jason, L. A., Weine, A. M., Johnson, J. H., Warren-Sohlberg, L., Filippelli, L. A., Turner, E. Y., & Lardon, C. (1992). *Helping transfer students: Strategies for educational and school readjustment.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kelley, H. H. (1991). Lewin, situations, and interdependence. *Journal of Social Issues, 47*(2), 211-33.

Kindermann, T. & Skinner, E.A. (1992). Modeling environmental development: Individual and contextual trajectories. In J. B. Asendorpf & J. Valsiner (Eds.) *Stability and change in development* (pp. 155-190). London: Sage.

Kuh, G. D. (1996). Guiding principles of creating seamless learning environments for undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*(2). pp. 135-48.

Kuznik, A. (1973). Reverse transfers from university to community college. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 13*(3), 250-253.

Laanan, F. S. (1998). *Beyond Transfer Shock: A Study of Students' College Experiences and Adjustment Processes at UCLA.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

Laanan, F. S. (1996). Making the transition: Understanding the adjustment process of community college transfer students. *Community College Review, 23*(4), 69-84.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping.* New York: Springer.

Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lopez, F. G. (1991). Patterns of family conflict and their relation to college student adjustment. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 69,* 257-260.

Michigan State University (1999). *Facts in brief: Academic Year 1999-2000.* Author.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Mullen, Edward J. (1976). *Evaluating student learning: Baccalaureate programs and the community college transfer student.* New York: Council on Social Work Education.

Nickens, J. M. (1972). *"Transfer Shock" or "Transfer Ecstasy?".* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 6, 1972.

Oliver, C. (1995). *The Community College Open-Door Philosophy: What Negative Outcomes Have Developed?* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 388 345).

Panel of Community College Faculty and Administrators (1996). Personal correspondence.

Parkes, K. R. (1986). Coping in stressful episodes: The role of individual differences, environmental factors, and situational characteristics. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51,* 1277-1292.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patterson, J. M., & McCubbin, H. I. (1987). Adolecent coping style and behaviors; Conceptualization and measurement. *Journal of Adolecence, 10,* 163-186.

Rice, K. G., FitzGerald, D. P., Whaley, T. J., & Gibbs, C. L. (1995). Cross-sectional and longitudinal examination of attachment, separation-individuation, and college student adjustment. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 73,* 463-473. Richardson, R. C., Jr., & Doucette, D. S. (1980). *Persistence, performance and degree achievement of Arizona's community college transfer in Arizona's public universities.* Tempe: Arizona State University Department of Higher and Adult Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 197 785).

Robbins, P. R., & Tanck, R. H. (1995). University students' preferred choices for social support. The Journal of Social Psychology, 135(6), 775-776.

Robson, H. N. (1956). *Success and failure of small-school superintendents: Factors contributing to the success or failure of school superintendents as determined by the use of the critical incidents technique.* Laramie, WY: University of Wyoming Curriculum and Research Center.

Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences.* New York: Teachers College.

Siemens, C. H. (1943). Predicting Success of Transfer Students. *Junior College Journal, September, 1943*, 24-28.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Suelzle, M., Singleton M. & Rosenfeld, R. (1983). Impact of the fit between students and universities: A comparison of three Chicago area universities and their student bodies. In Alan Kerckhoff. *Personal Change Over the Life Course* (pp. 155-81). JAI Press.

Suls, J., David, J. P., & Harvey, J. H. (1996). Personality and coping: Three generations of research. *Journal of Personality, 64*(4), 711-735.

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Blimling, G. S. (1996/1999). Students' out-of-class experiences and their influence on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), pp. 610-623.

Tierney, W. G. (1997). The parameters of affirmative action: Equity and excellence in the academy. *Review of Educational Research. 67*(2). pp. 165-96.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *The Journal Of Higher Education, 59*(4), 438-55.

Townsend, B. K., McNerny, N., & Arnold, A. (1993). Will this community college transfer student succeed? Factors affecting transfer student performance. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 17.* pp. 433-43.

Townsend, B. K. (1995). Community college transfer students: a case study of survival. *The Review of Higher Education, 18*(2), 175-193.

Watt, R. R. G. & Touton, F. C. (1930). Relative scholastic achievement of native students and junior college transfers at the University of Southern California. *California Quarterly of Secondary Education, 5*, 243-248.

Wertsch, J.V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Valentiner, D. P., Holahoan, C. J., Moos, R. H. (1994). Social support, appraisals of event controllability, and coping: An integrative model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*(6), 1094-1102.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS	
Author(s): Catherine T. Flaga	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: MAY, 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 1	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2A	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2B
Level 1 ↑ ☒	Level 2A ↑ ☐	Level 2B ↑ ☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here,→ please

Signature:	Printed Name/Position/Title: Catherine T. Flaga	
Organization/Address: Michigan State University, 203 Natural Science Bldg., E. Lansing MI 48824	Telephone: 517 432 7338	FAX: 517 432 2789
	E-Mail Address: flaga@msu.edu	Date: 10/26/03

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC®
Clearinghouse For
Community Colleges

University of California, Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Box 951521
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

EE 45

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com